



Reconnecting Communities Study

Executive Summary

JULY 2026



FUNDED THROUGH A CALTRANS SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING GRANT



Free Language Assistance | Ayuda gratuita con el idioma | Hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí | Libreng Tulong sa Wika
免費語言協助 | 免費語言協助 | 무료 언어 지원 | تہیناچہ قہجرت ہدعاسم

[SANDAG.org/lap](https://sandag.org/lap) | languageassistance@sandag.org | 619.699.1900

Table of Contents



SECTION 1:
About Reconnecting Communities

PAGES 2-3

Freeways and railways were often built through or alongside existing neighborhoods, creating barriers. Reconnecting Communities is about alleviating barriers.



SECTION 2:
Understanding the Study

PAGES 4-9

SANDAG’s Reconnecting Communities study is an urban planning effort focused on understanding where transportation infrastructure has divided communities.



SECTION 3:
Developing Potential Solutions

PAGES 10-31

With input from community members and information on current plans and previously successful projects, we identified barriers and potential improvements.



SECTION 4:
Next Steps

PAGES 32-33

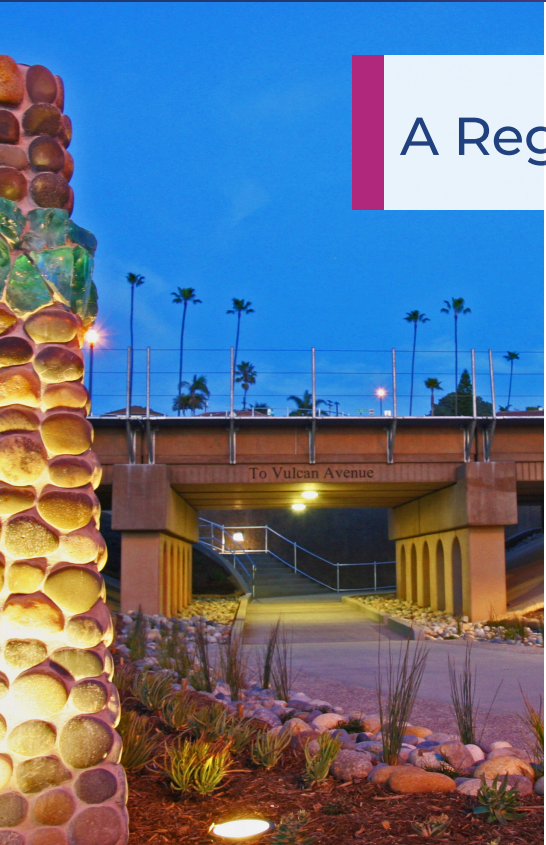
This study gives local jurisdictions and regional partners a shared foundation to pursue future opportunities as they arise.

Transportation Connects People to Opportunity

At its best, transportation infrastructure connects people and communities with convenient and safe access to jobs, services, and friends and family. It helps people travel between cities and neighborhoods. At its worst, it acts as a barrier, dividing communities and cutting off access to opportunity. Because freeways and railways, many times, were built through or alongside existing neighborhoods, barriers have been created between homes, schools, parks, jobs, health care, stores, and community services. These barriers can make local trips longer, less direct, less safe, and less comfortable, especially for people walking, biking, rolling, or using transit.

Reconnecting Communities is about alleviating barriers.

Transportation projects have lasting impacts on communities, so where we plan and build them matters. Historically, transportation infrastructure—such as highways, rail lines, and highway interchanges—has connected people, and at times, harmed existing communities by displacing residents and local businesses. Large construction projects can physically divide once-connected, vibrant neighborhoods. A report from the U.S. Department of Transportation observed that highway routes have often been located where land costs were lowest or political resistance was weakest, disproportionately affecting low-income neighborhoods and communities of color.



A Regional Effort to Reconnect

SANDAG's Reconnecting Communities study builds off the federal Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program. It is an urban planning effort focused on understanding where highways, rail lines, ramps, interchanges, and other major transportation infrastructure have divided communities or made it harder for people to access daily needs and key destinations.

The study identifies opportunities and potential solutions to address transportation barriers in focus areas throughout the region by restoring access, rebuilding connections, and investing in neighborhoods impacted by past transportation decisions. Solutions involve removing, retrofitting, mitigating, or replacing transportation barriers to improve people's daily lives and support communities with limited capacity. A safer street crossing can help a student get to school. A better transit connection can help someone reach work. The removal of a highway ramp or an improved underpass can help reconnect neighborhoods that have been separated for generations. Ultimately, this work is about connection and access.

Defining Focus Areas

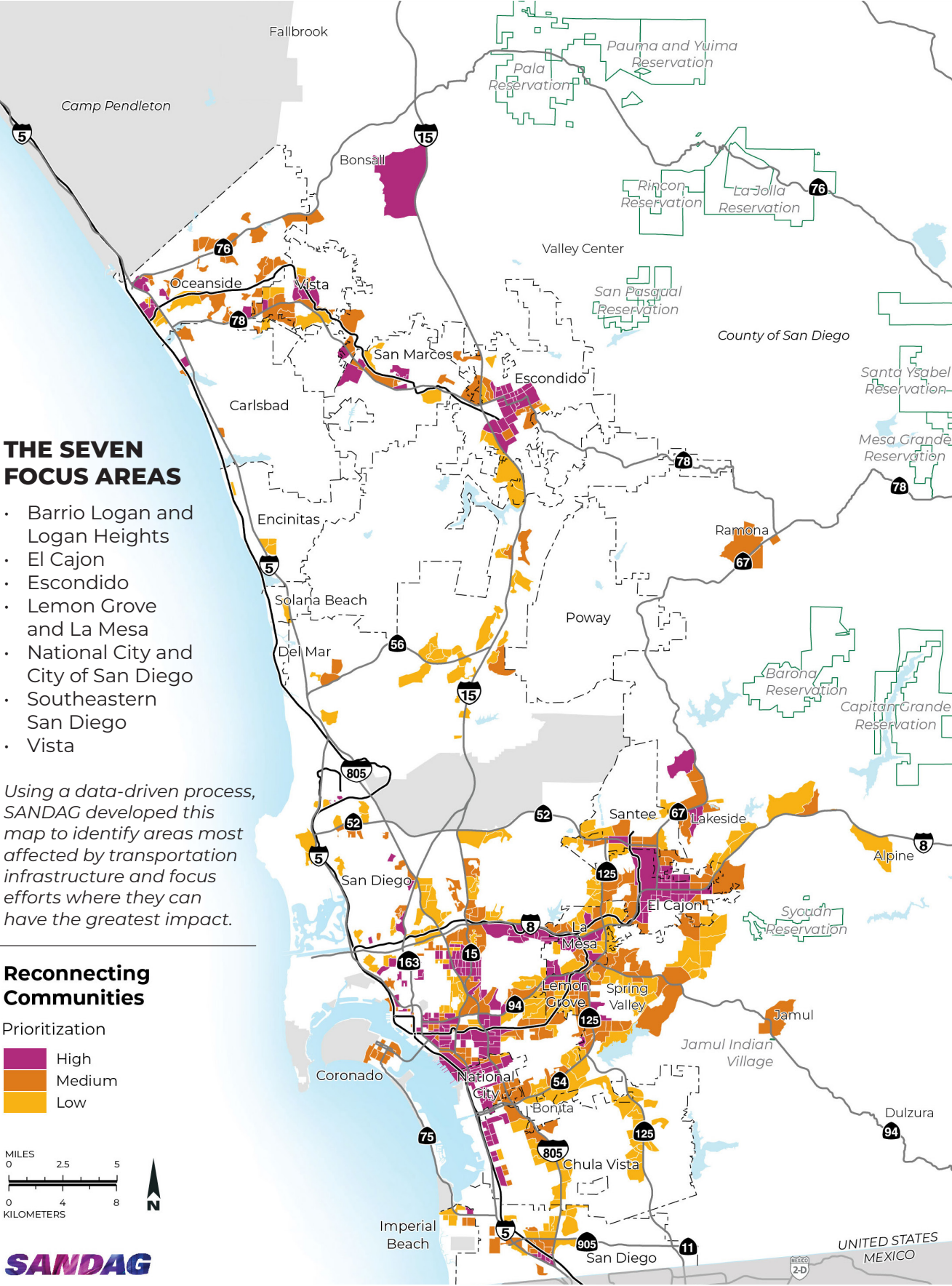
SANDAG staff worked with our Social Equity Working Group (active from 2022 to 2025) to define disconnected communities, a term to help identify project focus areas in the region.

SANDAG began this study by looking across the region at communities near major highways and rail lines. Using a data-driven process, the study aims to understand where transportation barriers overlap with other challenges, including limited access and mobility, traffic safety concerns, environmental health burdens, low-income households, and disinvestment.

This analysis helped identify where the impacts of transportation infrastructure may be greatest. After identifying the most affected areas, we considered additional factors such as local context, land use, concentration of people and destinations, and project opportunities. This resulted in seven focus areas chosen for deeper study and further development of potential solutions.

DISCONNECTED COMMUNITIES DEFINED

Disconnected communities are defined as low-income communities that were physically separated and/or displaced by transportation infrastructure such as highways and railways that created barriers to access and opportunities such as work, education, open spaces, medical services, and retail further burdened by safety, health, and mobility impacts and historical disinvestment.



Developing Tailored Solutions

Drawing on a review of current plans, an assessment of existing conditions, and partner and community input, the study identifies key challenges and potential solutions at a regional level. Our first step was documenting existing conditions across each community, including land use, demographics, transportation options, collision patterns, environmental burdens, and displacement risk. Next, we examined successful projects from around the country to identify strategies that have helped restore access and improve connections in communities facing similar challenges. To make sure we correctly understood local challenges and desires, we met directly with people in the focus areas to gather their feedback. Together, this research helped us identify common barriers, understand local needs, and explore which types of solutions could be effective in the San Diego region. Building on these findings, we developed potential solutions tailored to each focus area, along with

implementation considerations to help guide future planning efforts. The study is intended to inform future investment and prioritization decisions and does not replace project-level engineering, environmental review, or design.

We focused on finding practical, community-centered solutions using local data, community input, technical analysis, and lessons from other cities to improve connections across and around highway and rail barriers. Remedies could include safer crossings, better walking and biking routes, improved transit access, underpass enhancements, better public spaces, freeway lids, rail crossing improvements, corridor redesigns, and other types of solutions.

These strategies will help SANDAG and our partners work together to restore access, improve safety, support healthier communities, and help current residents benefit from future investment.



DOCUMENT EXISTING CONDITIONS
Review land use, demographics, collision patterns, environmental burdens, and more



LISTEN TO COMMUNITIES
Gather feedback from people in the focus areas

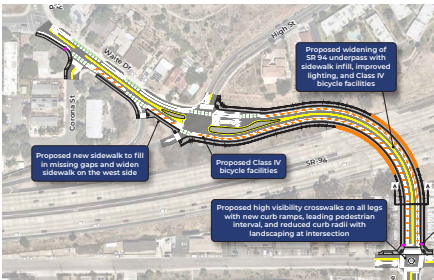
DEVELOP POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
Combine all the data to propose tailored solutions for each focus area



EXAMINE SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS
Identify strategies that have helped other communities



IDENTIFY COMMON BARRIERS
Understand local challenges and needs





Goals, Benefits, and Strategies

Goals

WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE

- Reconnect communities impacted by past transportation infrastructure decisions
- Reduce the barriers in communities created by highways and railroads
- Enhance people's connections to key community destinations

Benefits

WHY WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IT

- Improved travel safety and reduced traffic conflicts
- More travel options that are comfortable and accessible (including walking and biking)
- Seamless travel between neighborhoods
- Enhanced economic opportunities and access to community resources

Strategies

HOW WE CAN ACHIEVE IT

- Foster community and agency partnerships
- Highlight solutions and opportunities that address key community-identified challenges
- Sequence improvements to deliver low-cost, community-supported solutions quickly
- Pursue grants and other funding opportunities to help advance identified solutions
- Create regional implementation strategies

Community Partners Pointing the Way

Engagement Efforts

Residents, community-based organizations (CBOs), and city partners shared how highway and rail barriers affect daily life. Through a combination of continued coordination, virtual meetings, joint agency workshop, and CBO-led general public workshops, people asked for safer crossings, better lighting, slower speeds, improved sidewalks and bike lanes, and more comfortable connections to schools, parks, transit, shopping, and community services. They saw opportunities to add trees, shade, public art, green space, and other improvements to make barrier areas feel safer and more welcoming.

The feedback showed that reconnecting disconnected communities is about more than crossing a freeway or rail line. It is about making everyday trips safer, easier, and more comfortable for the people who live, work, study, and travel through these areas.



Common Themes



Alignment with Current Parallel Efforts

City and agency partners identified current and ongoing plans, studies, and capital projects that overlap with the focus areas in this study. These efforts are already shaping how transportation infrastructure is being reimagined in several communities across the region. The solutions included in this study are aligned with the current direction of those recommendations and, where possible, build on work already underway.

Because many of these efforts are still active and evolving, the solutions in this study represent a point-in-time snapshot. As projects advance through future planning and design phases, the lead agencies may refine solutions to reflect updated findings, community priorities, funding opportunities, and project-specific requirements.



Types of Solutions

Community members helped identify where barriers are most difficult to cross and what kinds of improvements would make daily trips safer, easier, and more comfortable. Through CBO-led outreach, SANDAG documented feedback in each focus area on location of desired improvements, challenges, and potential solutions. This showed where community priorities were strongest and where improvements could make the most meaningful impact.

SANDAG then organized the feedback into types of solutions—broad categories of improvements—such as improvements to crossings, infrastructure, street or community features, signals, or existing barriers. Within those categories, we identified specific project ideas such as lighting, public art, directional signage, intersection updates, signal coordination, sidewalk improvements, bike lanes, transit stop improvements, green space, ramp updates, bridges, freeway lids, tunnels, or removal of barriers.

SANDAG reviewed these types of solutions and specific project ideas alongside existing conditions data, previous plans and capital improvement projects, best practices, and lessons learned from other communities. We identified key crossing points in each focus area where transportation barriers create the greatest stress and where improvements could better connect people in neighborhoods to daily needs. Together, these inputs helped identify which ideas build on work already underway, fill gaps, and reveal new project opportunities.

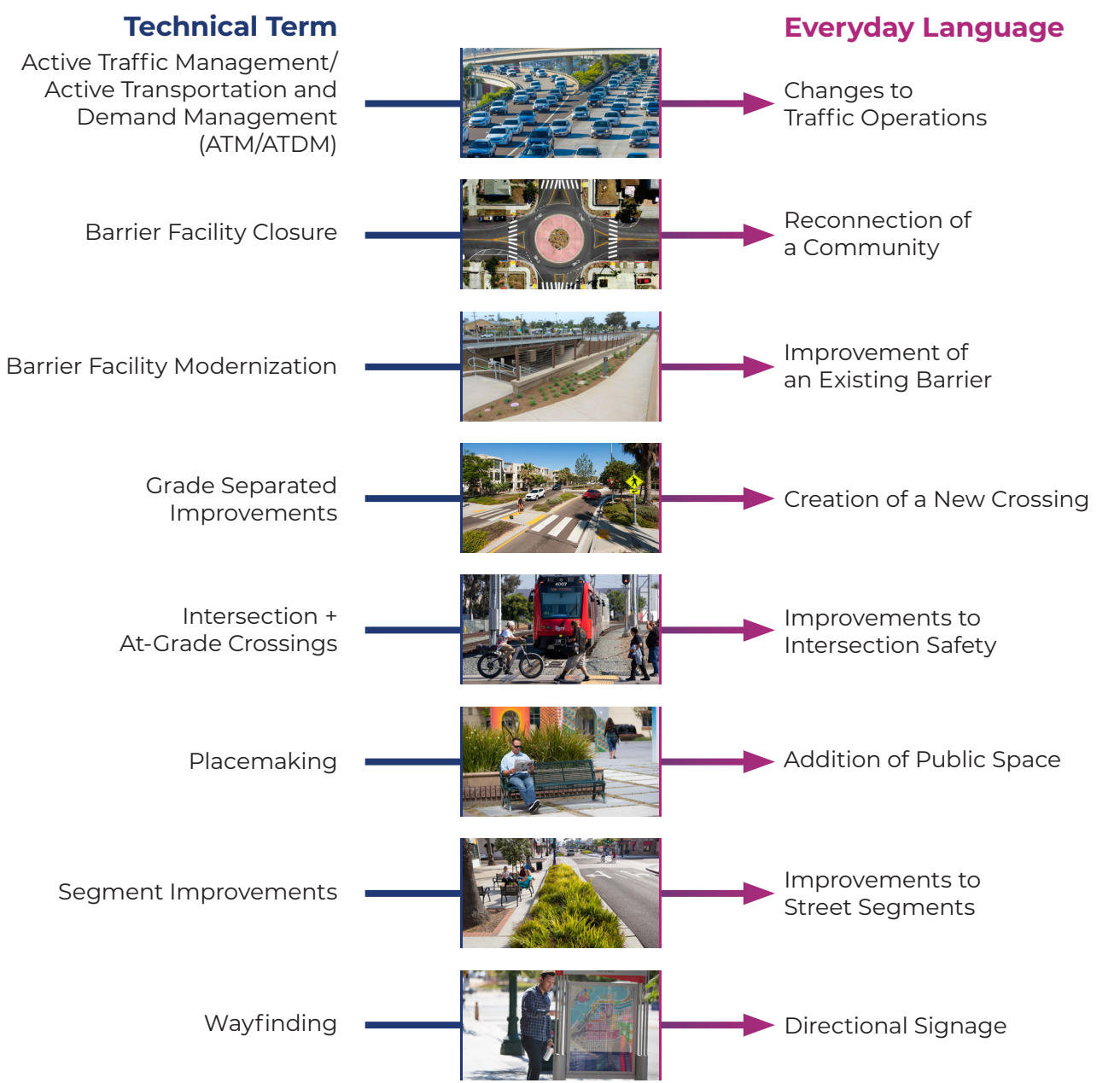
Potential solutions were then organized into near-, medium-, and long-term time frames based on factors such as complexity, coordination needs, cost, funding, and implementation readiness. This process turned community input into practical recommendations and project opportunities that can help restore connections and improve access.

Intersection and Crossing Improvements	Traffic and Rail Separation	Street Improvements	Community Improvements	Infrastructure Upgrades	Signal Improvements
Underpass Enhancement (Existing)	Moving Tracks Above or Below Roadway	Rails to Trails	Urban Design	Intersection Updates	Signal Coordination
Rail Crossing Enhancements	Freeway Underpass (Proposed)	Median Improvements	Enhanced Lighting/Art	Rail Track Realignment	Signal Priority
Bicycle/Pedestrian Crossing Improvements	Pedestrian and Bike Bridge	Bike Lanes	Green Space and Street Trees	Roadway Realignment	Barriers/Barrier Closures Highway/Ramp Removal
Signal Improvements	Freeway/Rail Tunnel	Improved Sidewalks	Sound Walls	Ramp Updates	
Directional Signs	Freeway Lids/Highway Caps and Decks	Speed Reduction	Transit Stop Improvements		

RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES CAN TAKE MANY FORMS

SANDAG’s study of best practices from across the country revealed a wide range of successful project types: freeway lids, highway removal, safer crossings, underpass improvements, trail conversions, lighting, public art, linear parks, and community-led reuse of leftover infrastructure. The right solution depends on many factors including the barrier, the surrounding neighborhood, available funding, and community priorities. The most successful projects are community-driven, context-sensitive, and designed to improve access, safety, public space, and opportunity.

Translating Technical Terms into Everyday Language



Meeting Community Needs

The types of solutions respond directly to what communities told us about their challenges and the improvements they want to see. Drawing on conversations with communities and agency partners, along with a review of existing conditions and best practices, we identified five community needs shared across the focus areas. Each community need is paired with the feedback we heard, the outcomes to work toward, and potential solutions that range from near- and long-term to address the need.

Community Need	Feedback Received	Desired Outcome	Potential Solutions
Make Crossings Safer	People want crossings that are safer, brighter, easier to understand, and more comfortable to use.	Improve the places where people cross highways, ramps, rail lines, and busy streets.	• Underpass enhancements • Bicycle and pedestrian crossings • At-grade rail crossings • Bridge or grade-separated crossings • Signal improvements • Directional signage
Improve Daily Travel	People want safer sidewalks, bikeways, transit access, and streets that feel less stressful.	Make everyday routes safer and more comfortable for walking, biking, rolling, riding transit, and driving.	• Pedestrian facilities • Bicycle facilities • Traffic calming • Medians • Signal coordination • Transit stop improvements • Transit signal priority
Activate Public Space	People want spaces near barriers to feel safer, cleaner, greener, and more connected to the community.	Turn underused or uncomfortable spaces near infrastructure into places that feel useful and welcoming.	• Urban design • Enhanced lighting • Public art • Events and programming • Pilot programs • Green infrastructure • Linear parks and trails
Modernize Infrastructure	People want fewer conflict points, shorter detours, and infrastructure that supports neighborhood movement, not just regional travel.	Redesign existing transportation infrastructure so it works better for local access and safety.	• Ramp reconfiguration • Ramp closure • Intersection reconfiguration • Roadway realignment • Rail realignment
Reconnect at a Larger Scale	People want long-term solutions that reconnect neighborhoods, create public space, and reduce the lasting impacts of transportation barriers.	Explore larger projects that repair major physical divisions and create new community opportunities.	• Freeway lids • Rail caps • Tunnels • Highway removal • Rail grade separation • Rails-to-trails/Class I paths

Focus Area Solutions

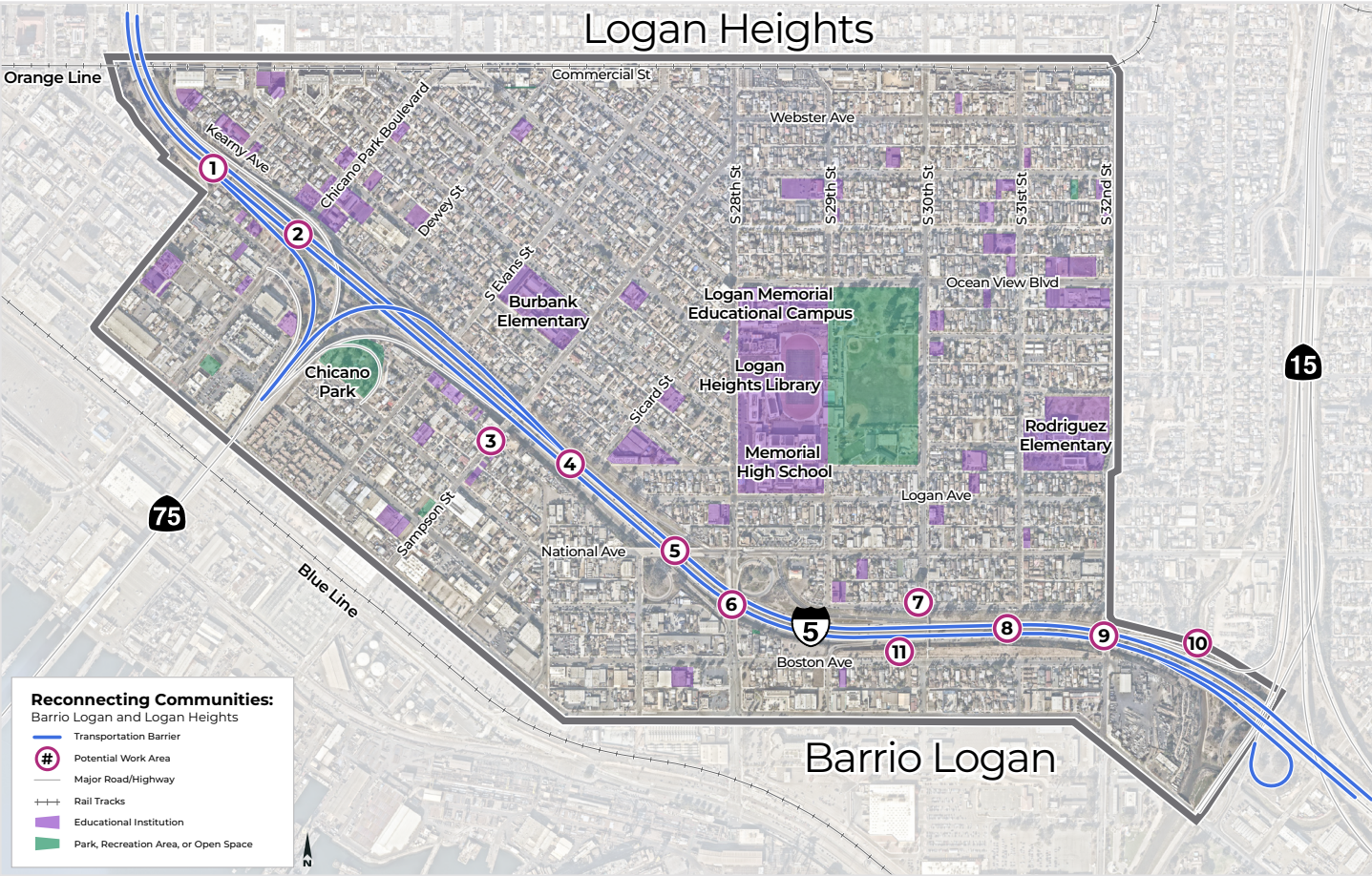
For each focus area, we developed a solutions matrix—a menu of options to address the challenges identified in that community. Each matrix brings together solutions from earlier planning efforts and documents solutions from current efforts that are underway and will continue once this study is completed. Every matrix reflects feedback and input from communities and agency partners.

The focus area sheets that follow present a sample of the solutions identified for each focus area. For each solution, the type of solution, the relevant barrier areas, the timeframe, and a brief description are noted. A complete solutions matrix for each focus area is available in Appendix F.

For each focus area, certain solutions stood out to communities and agency partners. These are highlighted in Solution Spotlights within the main report. These spotlights show how specific types of solutions could be built into a community. They serve two purposes: helping readers visualize what an improvement might look like and supporting next steps for implementation including pursuing funding.

Focus Area: Barrio Logan and Logan Heights

Barrio Logan and Logan Heights sit along Interstate 5, which runs through the heart of these historically connected neighborhoods. Freeway ramps, at-grade rail crossings near Harbor Drive, and heavy truck traffic serving the nearby port make everyday trips across the barrier feel unsafe and uncomfortable, especially for people walking and biking.



Identified Challenges

- Insufficient lighting near the freeway with community members describing discomfort on dark streets and at the pedestrian bridge
- Difficult and unsafe conditions for biking and walking across I-5, particularly along National Avenue and near 28th Street
- Significant truck movement and speeding on residential streets such as Boston Avenue and Newton Avenue
- Litter and a lack of maintenance and beautification at the pedestrian bridge and along fences and sidewalks
- Complicated road layout, at-grade rail crossings, and congestion at Harbor Drive and 32nd Street

Community Needs

- Enhanced lighting, public art, greenery, and urban design at work areas near the freeway
- Safer, more comfortable pedestrian and bicycle crossings, including a connection to the park by the bay
- A walkable connection with wayfinding along Chicano Park Boulevard
- Underused spaces near the freeway transformed into parks and open space
- Traffic calming and slower speeds on residential streets including Newton Avenue and Boston Avenue
- Signal improvements at key intersections along Harbor Drive and National Avenue

Types of Solutions

The solutions shown below are a sample from the solutions matrix, an appendix to the report. The matrix represents a menu of options for consideration based on an assessment of existing conditions, previous plans, current planning efforts, and community/agency input. Many options depend on close coordination between the city, Caltrans, and MTS, and several must align with the separate Harbor Drive 2.0 effort.

INTERSECTION AND CROSSING IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 11

Traffic calming and safer crossings can reduce conflicts where local streets meet the freeway and heavy truck routes. A potential solution identified is traffic calming along Boston Avenue between 28th and 32nd Streets, including curb extensions, raised crosswalks, and speed cushions coordinated with a future roundabout at 30th Street.

TRAFFIC AND RAIL SEPARATION

Proposed Work Areas: 1 4 5 8

Larger-scale solutions can repair the physical division created by I-5 and create new public space over the freeway. Potential solutions identified include a Boston Avenue freeway lid to create new neighborhood park space along with enhancements to the Beardsley Street pedestrian and bike bridge.

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 2 3 5 6 9 10 11

Providing safer, more comfortable walking and biking facilities was identified as a key community need, especially connecting neighborhoods to schools and the waterfront. Potential solutions identified include buffered bike lanes along National Avenue and enhanced bicycle boulevard and sidewalk improvements on Sampson Street connecting to Burbank Elementary School.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

Proposed Work Areas: 6 11

Reconfiguring freeway ramps can reduce conflicts, redirect truck traffic, and open land for community use. Potential solutions identified include realigning the I-5 north off-ramp at National Avenue to create open space and reconfiguring the 29th Street on-ramp to support the planned Boston Avenue linear park.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 2 5 6 8 9 10 11

Lighting, public art, and green space were among the most requested improvements to make areas near I-5 feel safer and more welcoming. Potential solutions identified include enhanced lighting along 28th Street near schools and businesses, a Boston Avenue linear open space and street trees adjacent to the freeway, and gateway signage and public art along Chicano Park Boulevard and 28th Street.

SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 5 6 9

Better-timed and transit-priority signals can smooth movement along busy corridors that carry buses and freight. Potential solutions identified include transit signal priority along National Avenue to support planned bus service and coordinated signals along 32nd Street to streamline movements through the corridor.

BARRIERS/BARRIER CLOSURES

Proposed Work Areas: 5

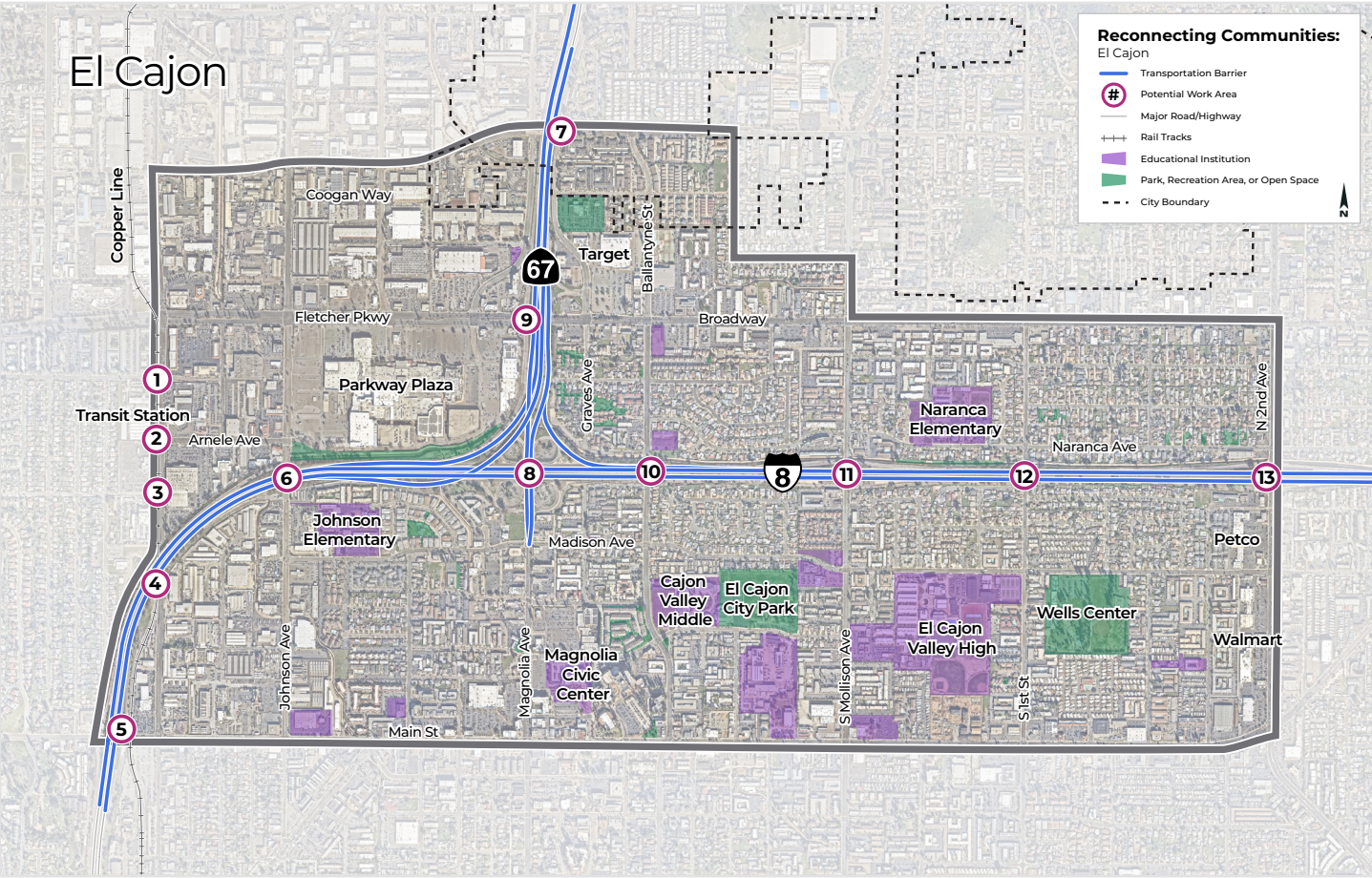
Closing an underused freeway ramp can free land for new open space and reduce a source of vehicle conflict. A potential solution identified is closing the I-5 southbound off-ramp at 27th Street to redevelop the space into a neighborhood open space and reconnect the street grid.

SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT

Improvements in work areas 5 and 6 could reshape these blocks into a safer, greener, and more connected gateways. Proposed solutions on National Avenue include buffered bike lanes, signal-priority improvements, and a widened bridge with dedicated pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Closure of the I-5 southbound off-ramp at 27th Street would allow for new open space, and 28th Street could benefit from gateway signage and enhanced lighting.

Focus Area: El Cajon

El Cajon is divided by Interstate 8 and State Route 67 which separate neighborhoods, schools, and shopping destinations such as Parkway Plaza. Long gaps between crossings, dark underpasses, and the large I-8/SR 67 interchange make it difficult and uncomfortable for people to walk, bike, or reach transit across the barrier.



Identified Challenges

- Long gaps between safe crossings along the I-8 corridor, limiting access to destinations such as Parkway Plaza
- Poorly lit underpasses described as “scary” and uncomfortable, particularly at Main Street and near Naranja Elementary
- Narrow sidewalks, missing curb ramps, and minimal bicycle infrastructure serving pedestrians, wheelchair users, and riders of scooters and skateboards
- Conflict points and confusing signage at the Magnolia Avenue and I-8 interchange
- Speeding and unsafe driver behavior, especially near schools

Community Needs

- Enhanced lighting at underpasses and dark corridors identified as a high priority
- High-visibility crosswalks, painted road markings, reflective pedestrian signage, and safer crossings at key work areas
- Wider sidewalks and protected bicycle facilities connecting to schools, transit, and commercial areas
- More direct transit connections and safer crossings to Parkway Plaza
- Ramp and interchange improvements and traffic calming near schools
- Improved transit stops with shade and seating plus Safe Routes to School improvements

Types of Solutions

The solutions shown below are a sample from the solutions matrix, an appendix to the report. The matrix represents a menu of options for consideration based on an assessment of existing conditions, previous plans, current planning efforts, and community/agency input. Several proposed bikeway improvements involve trade-offs, such as fewer or narrower travel lanes, that would need further study.

INTERSECTION AND CROSSING IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1 2 5 6 8 9 13

Widening existing underpasses and adding safer crossings can close long gaps in the walking and biking network. Potential solutions identified include widening the underpasses to add bicycle and pedestrian facilities and pedestrian crossing improvements with rapid flashing beacons at the Magnolia Avenue and I-8 ramps.

TRAFFIC AND RAIL SEPARATION

Proposed Work Areas: 1 2 3

A long-term vision of a grade-separated Copper Line can remove conflicts between trains, vehicles, and people while creating new open space. Potential solutions identified include grade separations at Petree Street, Arnele Avenue, and Wagner Drive, paired with a linear park, promenade, or trail in the newly available space.

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 2 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Providing protected bikeways and improved sidewalks was identified as a key community need, especially connecting to schools and Parkway Plaza. Potential solutions identified include a Class IV bikeway on Marshall Avenue, protected bike facilities on Main Street, and ADA-compliant sidewalk upgrades along Broadway.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

Proposed Work Areas: 1 8 11 13

Reconfiguring ramp intersections can reduce conflict points. Community members identified the movement between SR 67 and I-8 as a major challenge, and further evaluation is needed to improve driver navigation. Potential solutions identified include roundabouts at the Mollison Avenue and 2nd Street ramp intersections.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1 2 4 5 6 9 10 12

Enhanced lighting and public art at underpasses were the most requested improvements to make crossings feel safer. Potential solutions identified include underpass lighting and community murals at Main Street, 1st Street, and Ballantyne Street, and improved transit stops with shelters and lighting along Johnson Avenue.

SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1 13

Coordinated signals and pedestrian-priority timing can make crossings near the rail corridor safer and reduce delay. Potential solutions identified include signal coordination and at-grade rail crossing enhancements at Petree Street and coordinated signals along 2nd Street between the city and freeway.

BARRIERS/BARRIER CLOSURES

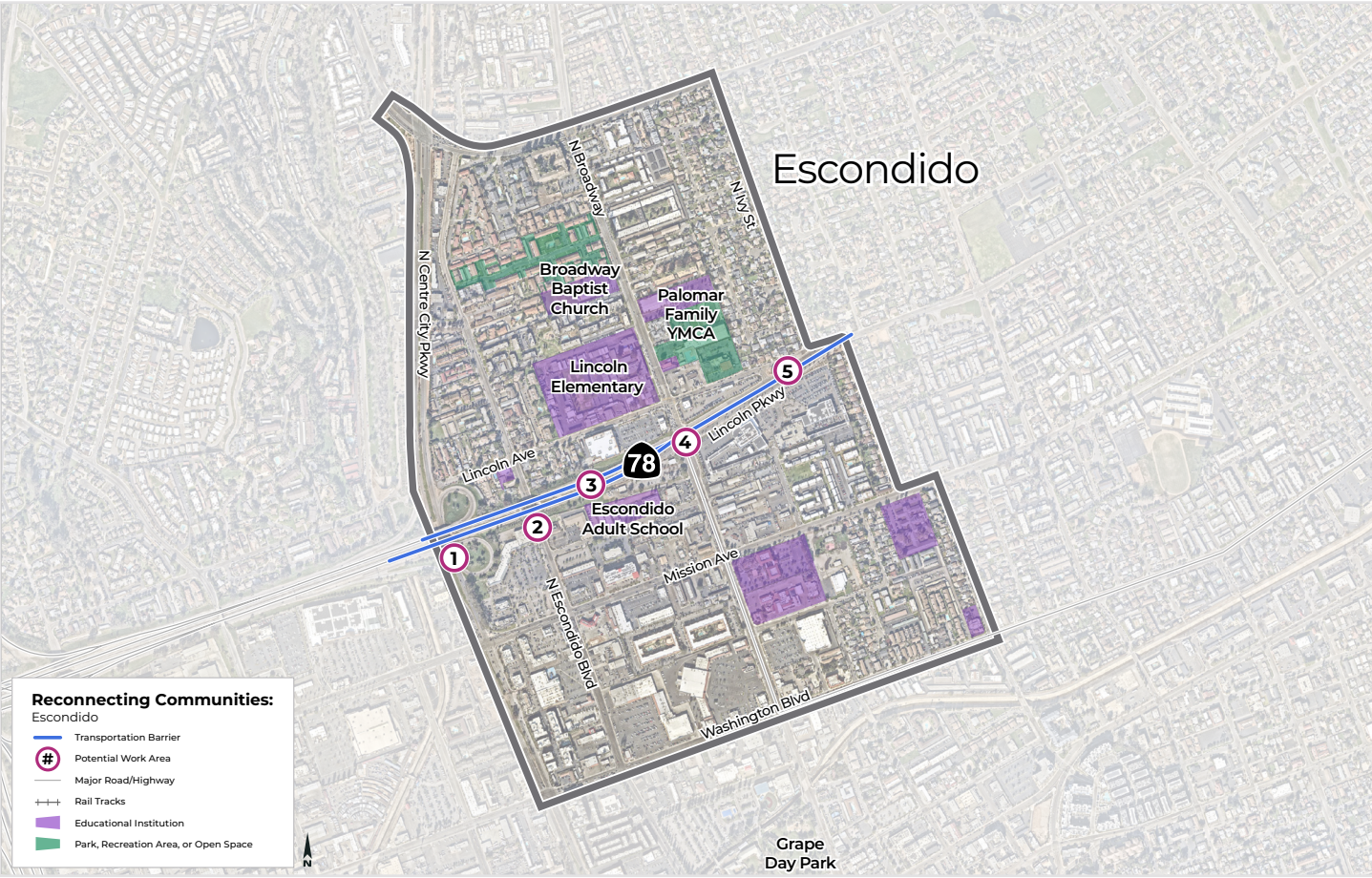
No barrier closure or highway/ramp removal solutions were identified for this focus area. The potential solutions instead emphasizes improving and modernizing the existing barriers.

SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT

Improvements around the Marshall Avenue corridor, from Petree Street to Wagner Drive (work areas 1, 2, and 3), could make the corridor safer and easier to navigate while connecting neighborhoods to transit and shopping. A pre-signal could provide early notification of an approaching train. Curb ramps could be reconfigured at Petree Street, and pedestrian facilities could be enhanced with ADA-compliant crossings along Arnele Avenue toward Parkway Plaza. A corridor-wide Class IV bikeway with fewer/narrower vehicle lanes would enhance Marshall Avenue.

Focus Area: Escondido

Escondido is divided by State Route 78, which separates residential neighborhoods and schools from shopping and services along the Broadway and Lincoln Avenue corridors. Fast-moving traffic, disconnected signals, and difficult crossings near SR 78 make it especially hard for students and families to cross safely on foot or by bike.



Identified Challenges

- Serious safety concerns at the Center City Parkway and SR 78 interchange, where many lanes, short freeway merge distances, and high speeds make crossing difficult
- Missing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure connecting the east and west sides of SR 78, including for residents in newer development west of the focus area
- Speeding, failure to yield to pedestrians, and aggressive driving at key work areas
- Traffic spilling into the Lincoln Parkway/ Broadway intersection due to lack of signal timing coordination between city- and Caltrans-operated signals

Community Needs

- Signal improvements and coordination, especially at Broadway and Lincoln Avenue
- Protected pedestrian and bicycle facilities through the Center City Parkway interchange with safer crossings and adequate merge distances
- Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements such as refuge islands, longer crossing times, and high-visibility crosswalks at work area 4
- Protected bike lanes to fill gaps in the network, especially with the rise of e-bikes
- Speed reduction and traffic calming, particularly near schools
- Improved lighting and community murals at the Escondido Boulevard underpass

Types of Solutions

The solutions shown below are a sample from the solutions matrix, an appendix to the report. The matrix represents a menu of options for consideration based on an assessment of existing conditions, previous plans, current planning efforts, and community/agency input. Many options depend on coordination between the city and Caltrans, particularly signal synchronization and any work at SR 78 and Broadway.

INTERSECTION AND CROSSING IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 4 5

Safer crossings and protected intersections were a top community priority, especially for students walking and biking to school. Potential solutions identified include a pedestrian refuge island and two-stage crossing at Broadway and SR 78, and protected intersections at Broadway and at Garrick Way.

SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 4

Synchronizing signals that are currently operated separately by the city and Caltrans can reduce traffic buildup and improve safety at the SR 78 crossing. A potential solution identified is coordinating the signals at Broadway/SR 78 and Broadway/ Lincoln Avenue so they operate together.

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1 2 4 5

Protected bike lanes, traffic calming, and complete sidewalks were identified as key community needs. Potential solutions identified include bike lanes on Lincoln Avenue connecting facilities on Broadway and Escondido Boulevard, traffic calming and a mid-block crossing along Broadway, and a new sidewalk connection along Lincoln Parkway.

TRAFFIC AND RAIL SEPARATION

No grade separation, freeway lid, or bridge solutions were identified for this focus area. Community feedback centered on near-term crossing, signal, and street improvements rather than large-scale separation projects.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

Proposed Work Areas: 1 4

Ramp updates paired with corridor improvements can slow traffic entering local streets from SR 78. A potential solution is installing advanced caution signage and rumble strips on the SR 78 off-ramp at Broadway to alert drivers to reduce speed as the freeway ends.

BARRIERS/BARRIER CLOSURES

No barrier closure or highway/ramp removal solutions were identified for this focus area. The potential solutions focus on safer crossings, better signals, and improved streets across SR 78.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1 2 5

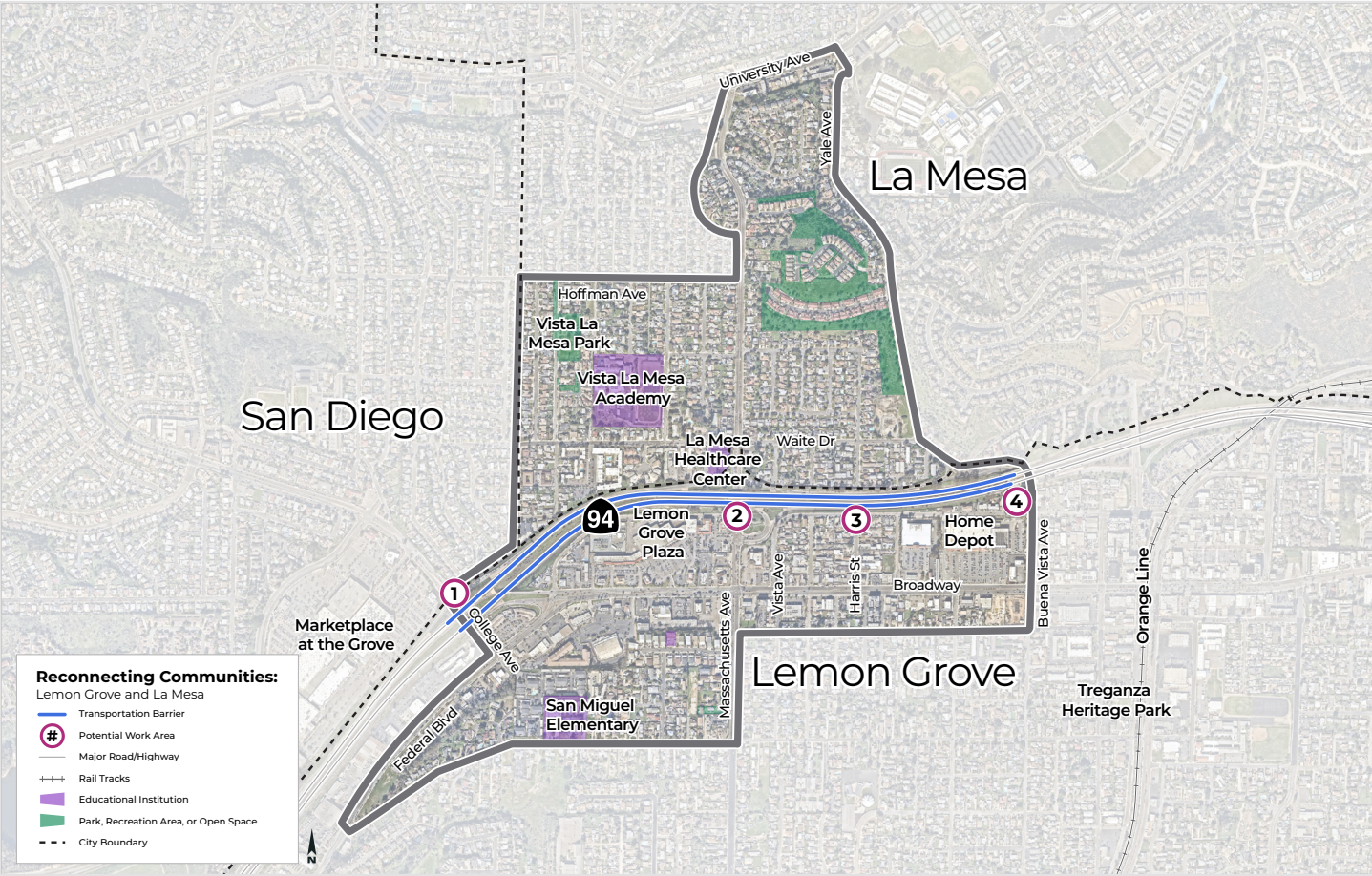
Lighting, murals, and improved transit stops can make the crossing feel safer and more comfortable. Potential solutions identified include a community mural, enhanced lighting, upgraded bus stops along Escondido Boulevard, and a proposed northern circulator bus connecting neighborhoods and schools.

SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT

Improvements in work area 4, near Broadway and Lincoln Avenue, could make crossings for the many students and families traveling to nearby Lincoln Elementary safer and easier. City and Caltrans signals at Broadway/SR 78 and Broadway/Lincoln Avenue could be synchronized. By extending the median to create a pedestrian refuge island, a two-stage crossing could be implemented. New bike lanes with leading pedestrian intervals and high-visibility crossings along Lincoln Avenue in front of the school would improve safety.

Focus Area: Lemon Grove and La Mesa

Lemon Grove and La Mesa are separated by State Route 94, which divides neighborhoods from schools, the Lemon Grove Trolley Station, and businesses along Broadway. Narrow sidewalks, dark underpasses, and missing crossings make it difficult for residents, including students heading to Helix High, to walk and bike across the freeway.



Identified Challenges

- Lack of safe crossings across SR 94, particularly connecting La Mesa neighborhoods to businesses in Lemon Grove
- Dangerous, short on- and off-ramps at work area 2 with frequent traffic backups, making merging and slowing feel unsafe
- Residents north of the barrier discouraged from traveling south to Lemon Grove, missing connections and visitor opportunities
- Insufficient lighting and poor sidewalks
- Limited ADA-accessible facilities and an unpleasant walking environment near work area 4
- Encampments and limited uses south of the barrier along North Avenue near work area 3

Community Needs

- Improved ADA-compliant sidewalks
- Reconfiguration of the short on- and off-ramps
- Protected bike lanes and underpass enhancements to improve safety for people crossing SR 94
- Continuous connections across SR 94 that link La Mesa neighborhoods north of the barrier to businesses and grocery stores in Lemon Grove to the south
- Greening, beautification, landscaping, and community-led public art, especially at work areas 2 and 4
- Enhanced lighting, signal improvements and coordination, and traffic calming, with priority at the SR 94 off-ramp area

Types of Solutions

The solutions shown below are a sample from the solutions matrix, an appendix to the report. The matrix represents a menu of options for consideration based on an assessment of existing conditions, previous plans, current planning efforts, and community/agency input. Many options require coordination between the cities of Lemon Grove and La Mesa, Caltrans, and MTS, especially work within the SR 94 right-of-way and any transit stop changes.

INTERSECTION AND CROSSING IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 4

Widening an underpass and improving lighting can create a safer, more comfortable crossing under SR 94. A potential solution identified is widening the Waite Drive underpass to fill sidewalk gaps, improve lighting, and explore Class IV bicycle facilities, providing a continuous connection toward the future Waite Drive Park.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1 2 4

Enhanced lighting, public art, and gateway signage were among the most requested improvements to make underpasses feel safer. Potential solutions identified include enhanced underpass lighting and murals along College Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue, with gateway signage, landscaping, and public art to improve the walking environment.

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1 2 4

Providing safer, more comfortable pedestrian and bicycle facilities was identified as a key community need, especially connecting La Mesa residents to businesses and opportunities in Lemon Grove. Potential solutions identified include infill sidewalks and ADA curb ramps at Buena Vista and North Avenue with wayfinding to the Trolley station, protected bike lanes on Waite Drive, and Class IV bikeways on College Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue.

SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1

Coordinated signals can reduce congestion and delays where local streets meet the SR 94 ramps. A potential solution identified is coordinating signals along College Avenue to streamline movements through the corridor.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

Proposed Work Areas: 2

Ramp updates paired with traffic calming measures can slow traffic and reduce backups where the SR 94 off-ramp meets local streets. A potential solution identified is installing advanced caution signage and rumble strips at the SR 94 and Massachusetts Avenue ramps to alert drivers to reduce speed.

TRAFFIC AND RAIL SEPARATION

No grade separation, freeway lid, or new bridge solution is included as a matrix solution for this focus area. Community feedback centered on near-term crossing, street, and lighting improvements.

BARRIERS/BARRIER CLOSURES

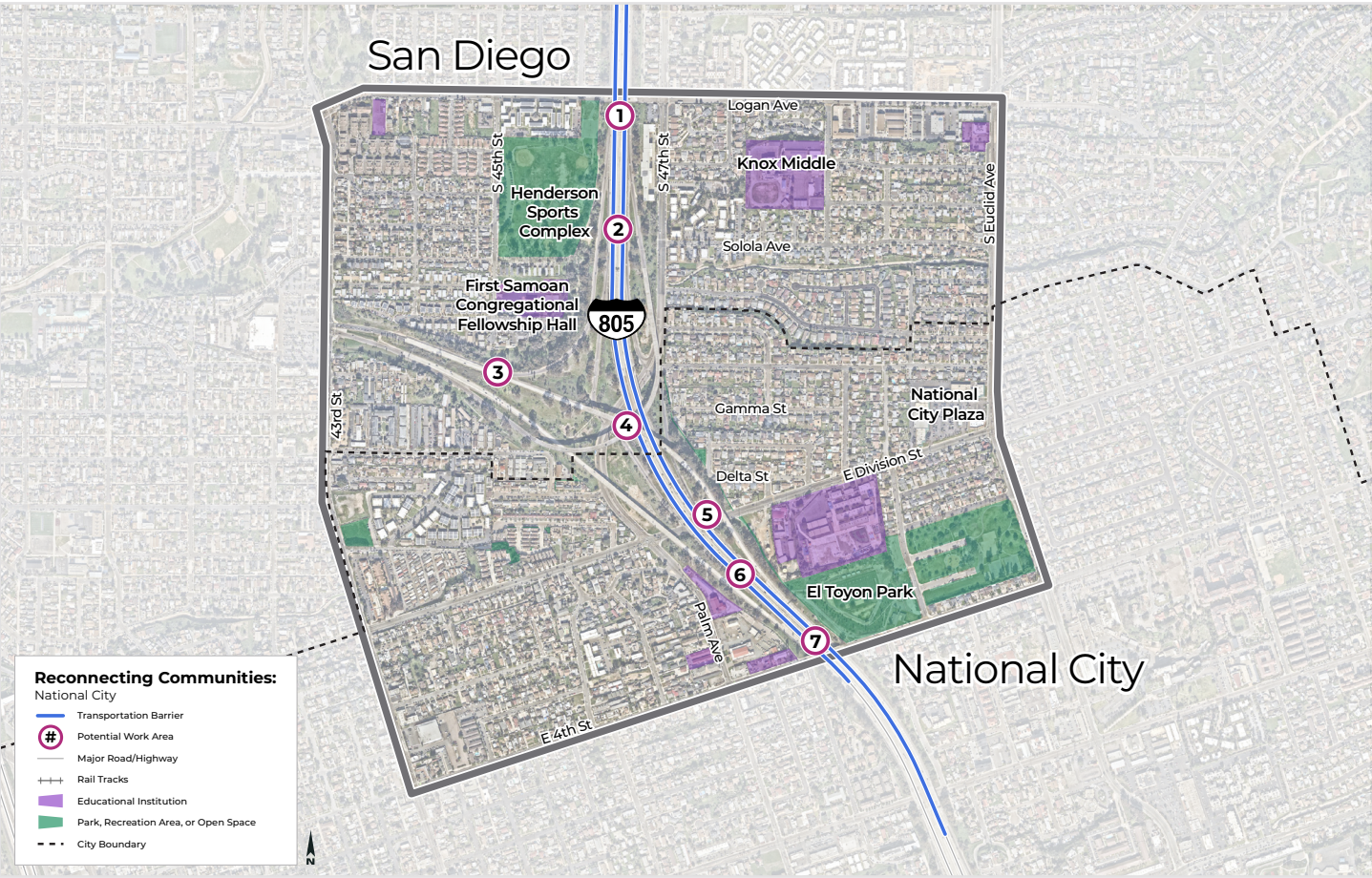
No barrier closure or highway/ramp removal solutions were identified for this focus area. The identified potential solutions emphasize improving crossings, streets, and lighting along SR 94.

SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT

Work area 4, at the Waite Drive underpass from North Avenue to Waite Drive in La Mesa, is a key location for improvements. Near-term infill sidewalks with ADA curb ramps, high-visibility crosswalks, and wayfinding to the Lemon Grove Trolley Station at Buena Vista and North Avenue can improve the connection right away. In the long term, widening of the underpass to add Class IV bicycle facilities, widened sidewalks, and improved lighting would provide a continuous, comfortable route toward the future Waite Drive Park.

Focus Area: National City and City of San Diego

The focus area straddles Interstate 805 at the boundary of National City and the City of San Diego, where the freeway and its ramps separate neighborhoods along Logan Avenue, Division Street, and 4th Street. Dark underpasses and overpasses, missing sidewalks and bike facilities, and freeway noise make it uncomfortable to cross the barrier and reach nearby parks, schools, and community destinations.



Identified Challenges

- Insufficient lighting by the freeway, with community members describing discomfort on dark streets such as Logan Avenue and Division Street
- Roads such as 4th Street being treated like freeways, with frequent collisions attributed to speeding
- Missing sidewalk/bicycle connections, including to Willie Henderson Park and El Toyon Park
- Difficult and unsafe conditions for biking and walking across I-805
- Freeway noise affecting neighborhoods near the barrier
- Illegal dumping at underused sites near the freeway

Community Needs

- Enhanced lighting, public art, greenery, and urban design at work areas near the freeway
- Safer pedestrian and bicycle crossings, including new connections over or under I-805
- Underused spaces near the freeway converted into community gathering places and open space
- Traffic calming and slower speeds on streets such as 4th Street
- Complete sidewalks and bike facilities connecting neighborhoods to parks and the Trolley
- Sound walls or other measures to reduce freeway noise

Types of Solutions

The solutions shown below are a sample from the solutions matrix, an appendix to the report. The matrix represents a menu of options for consideration based on an assessment of existing conditions, previous plans, current planning efforts, and community/agency input. Many options depend on coordination among National City, the City of San Diego, and Caltrans.

INTERSECTION AND CROSSING IMPROVEMENTS

Crossing improvements are packaged into the street, community, and traffic and rail separation solution types. No standalone intersection or crossing improvement is listed as a separate solution for this focus area.

TRAFFIC AND RAIL SEPARATION

Proposed Work Areas: 2

Larger-scale crossings can reconnect neighborhoods separated by I-805. A potential solution identified is a pedestrian and bicycle bridge over I-805 between Boston Avenue and Solana Avenue, with new sidewalk connections on both ends of the bridge.

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1 4 5 7

Providing safer, more comfortable walking and biking facilities and calmer streets was identified as a key community need. Potential solutions include the planned Logan Avenue Bikeway and Encanto to Barrio Logan Bikeway, extending the planned South Bay to Southeastern Bikeway to 47th Street, widening sidewalks on Logan Avenue, and improving sidewalks, lighting, landscaping and road design to encourage slower speeds along 47th Street.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

Proposed Work Areas: 3

Reconfiguring ramps and access points can reduce conflicts and open land for community use. A potential solution identified is the I-805 reconfiguration at 43rd, 47th, and Division Streets, which pairs ramp removal with new access connections and open space, an approach participants discussed alongside roundabouts to manage diverted traffic.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1 4 5 7

Lighting, landscaping, public art, and transit amenities were among the most requested improvements to make areas near I-805 feel safer and more welcoming. Potential solutions identified include enhanced lighting and landscaping on the Logan Avenue bridge, lighting and murals in the Division Street underpass, transit shelters and ADA-compliant sidewalks along Logan Avenue, and a pocket park in the space beneath I-805 north of Division Street.

SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1

Transit-priority signals can support planned bus service along corridors that cross the freeway. A potential solution identified is transit signal priority or a queue jump for planned transit routes at Logan Avenue and 47th Street.

BARRIERS/BARRIER CLOSURES

Proposed Work Areas: 3

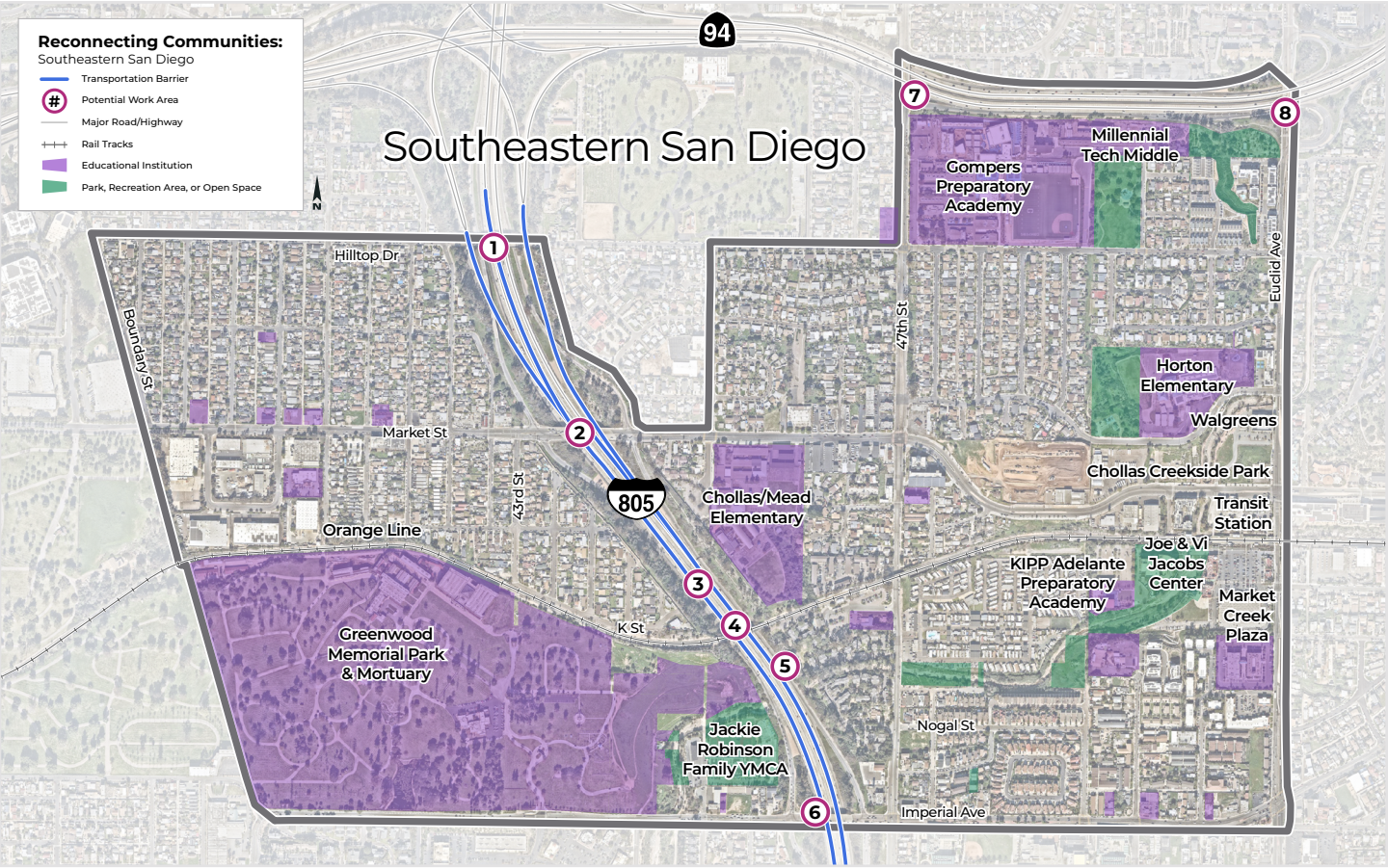
Removing underused freeway ramps can reduce conflicts and free land for community use. A potential solution identified is reconfiguring I-805 by removing the southbound on- and off-ramps at 43rd Street to create new access connections between 43rd Street, 47th Street, and Division Street, with the freed space developed into open space.

SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT

The area around I-805 at 43rd, 47th, and Division Streets stands out as a place for a coordinated, longer-term strategy. Reconfigured freeway ramps could create new access connections and reclaim land for open space. Paired with enhanced lighting, murals, and a pocket park beneath the freeway, this could reconnect neighborhoods and turn underused space into a community asset. Participants suggested this approach be advanced holistically alongside open-space opportunities.

Focus Area: Southeastern San Diego

Southeastern San Diego is divided by Interstate 805 and State Route 94, separating neighborhoods from schools, parks, transit, and destinations along Market Street, Imperial Avenue, and Euclid Avenue. Poor lighting, missing sidewalks and bike facilities, wide fast-moving streets, and difficult crossings make everyday trips across the barrier feel unsafe, especially for children and people walking.



Identified Challenges

- Insufficient lighting near the freeway and along corridors such as Imperial Avenue, making walking at night feel unsafe
- Wide streets with fast-moving vehicles, particularly along Imperial Avenue, and serious safety concerns from speeding on 47th Street near schools
- Missing bike facilities and incomplete or narrow sidewalks, creating undesirable walking environments
- Difficult crossings and limited access to destinations
- Bus stops on narrow streets without room for shelters, limiting comfortable transit access

Community Needs

- Enhanced lighting along corridors and at crossings (a top community priority)
- Green space, street trees, and urban greening (a top community need)
- Safer pedestrian and bicycle crossings connecting neighborhoods to parks, schools, and the Trolley
- Complete sidewalks, protected bike facilities, and improved transit stops with shelters and seating
- Traffic calming and speed reduction, especially near schools and along Imperial Avenue
- Gateway signage and public art to mark and connect neighborhoods

Types of Solutions

The solutions shown below are a sample from the solutions matrix, an appendix to the report. The matrix represents a menu of options for consideration based on an assessment of existing conditions, previous plans, current planning efforts, and community/agency input. Many options require coordination between the city, Caltrans, and MTS.

INTERSECTION AND CROSSING IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 7 8

Safer crossings can shorten crossing distances and address serious safety concerns near schools. Potential solutions identified include pedestrian crossing improvements at 47th Street and A Street/C Street with curb extensions and a pedestrian hybrid beacon, and a new pedestrian crossing on Euclid Avenue with a refuge island, high-visibility crosswalks, and a pedestrian hybrid beacon near the SR 94 off-ramp.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

Proposed Work Areas: 8

Reconfiguring a freeway ramp can reduce conflicts and free land for community use. A potential solution identified is reconfiguring the SR 94 eastbound off-ramp at Euclid Avenue from a cloverleaf to a diamond interchange and repurposing the reclaimed space for open space with a trail connection to Chollas Radio Open Space.

TRAFFIC AND RAIL SEPARATION

Proposed Work Areas: 3 4

Larger-scale crossings and a freeway lid can repair the division created by I-805 and the Trolley. Potential solutions identified include a K Street pedestrian and bike bridge connecting across I-805 to the 47th Street Trolley Station, and a freeway lid over I-805 between Market Street and the Orange Line Trolley bridge to create new open space connected to the station.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1 2 6 8

Lighting, public art, gateway signage, and improved transit stops were among the most requested improvements to make corridors feel safer and more connected. Potential solutions identified include enhanced lighting on Hilltop Drive, gateway signage and public art on Market Street and Imperial Avenue, and transit stop enhancements with shelters, lighting, and improved sidewalks along Imperial Avenue.

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 2 4 5 6

Providing protected bike facilities and completing the bikeway network was identified as a key community need, alongside completing sidewalks. Potential solutions identified include a Market Street bikeway with fewer/narrower vehicle lanes, and a Class I bicycle facility parallel to I-805 that crosses the Orange Line to connect planned facilities on Imperial Avenue and Market Street.

SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 8

Transit-priority signals can improve service where multiple routes cross the freeway ramps. A potential solution identified is transit signal priority at the Euclid Avenue and SR 94 ramps to support three existing and planned transit routes.

BARRIERS/BARRIER CLOSURES

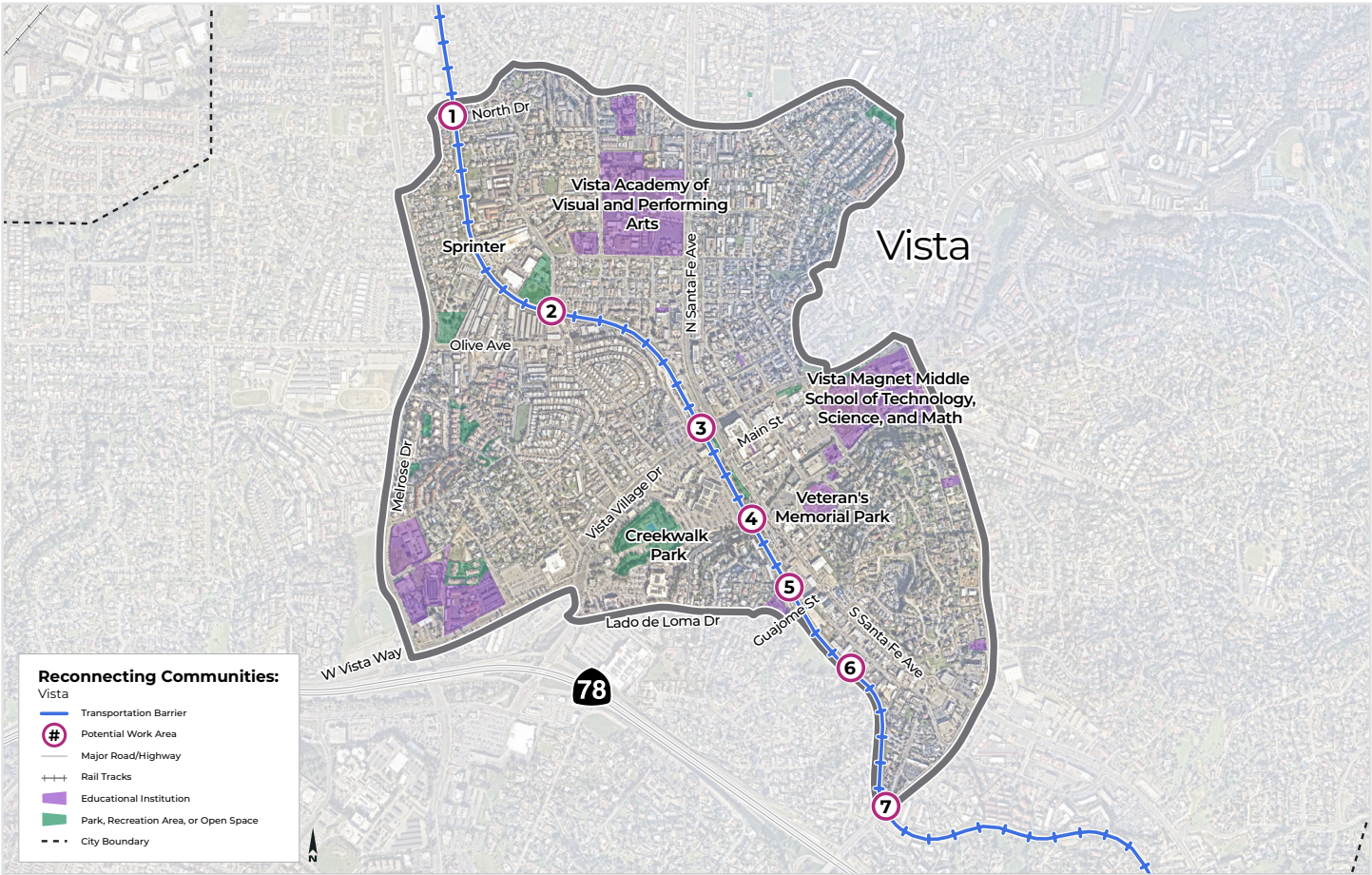
No barrier closure or highway/ramp removal solution is listed as a separate solution for this focus area. Ramp reconfiguration is addressed under Infrastructure Upgrades.

SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT

The K Street connection to the 47th Street Trolley Station (work area 4) is a focal point for reconnecting the community. A pedestrian and bike facility running parallel to the Orange Line and crossing over I-805 could link K Street to the Trolley station and the planned multiuse trail on the eastern edge of Greenwood Memorial Park.

Focus Area: Vista

Vista is divided by the SPRINTER rail corridor, which runs through the city between neighborhoods, schools, shopping, the Vista Transit Center, and destinations along Santa Fe Avenue and Vista Village Drive. Limited crossings, at-grade rail crossings without pedestrian protections, narrow sidewalks, and poor lighting make it difficult and often unsafe to cross the tracks on foot or by bike, leading many residents to drive even for short trips.



Identified Challenges

- Limited opportunities to cross the SPRINTER corridor
- Multiple at-grade rail crossings lacking pedestrian protections such as waiting areas, physical barriers, or crossing gates
- Congestion and long queues at key crossings
- Limited lighting at crossings and along corridors such as Los Angeles Drive, Vista Village Drive, and Civic Center Drive

Community Needs

- Safer at-grade rail crossings by coordinating with NCTD and CPUC on crossing treatments such as pedestrian path delineation and protections
- Enhanced, pedestrian-scale lighting at crossings and along nearby streets
- Wider sidewalks and bicycle facilities to support walking and biking near the corridor
- Green space, street trees, placemaking, and public art, including along the planned Inland Rail Trail
- Longer-term grade separation at identified location to remove conflicts between trains, vehicles, and people

Types of Solutions

The solutions shown below are a sample from the solutions matrix, an appendix to the report. The matrix represents a menu of options for consideration based on an assessment of existing conditions, previous plans, current planning efforts, and community/agency input. Because the barrier is an active rail corridor, solutions are subject to agency’s policies and require coordination with and approval from the North County Transit–San Diego Railroad (NCTD) and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

Grade separation and at-grade crossing improvements each carry significant costs and feasibility implications. Because each community has its own grade separation priorities, these solutions require additional consideration and evaluation at the project level implementation.

INTERSECTION AND CROSSING IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 7 8

Enhancing at-grade rail crossings can add protection where people cross the tracks today. Potential solutions identified include pedestrian crossing improvements at the Los Angeles Drive, Guajome Street, and Civic Center Drive at-grade rail crossings, each coordinated with NCTD and the CPUC.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

No standalone roadway or rail-realignment solution is listed for this focus area.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 1 2 6 7

Enhanced, pedestrian-scale lighting can make crossings feel safer. Potential solutions identified include enhanced lighting along Los Angeles Drive, pedestrian-scale lighting at the Vista Village Drive crossing, and additional lighting along Civic Center Drive.

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed Work Areas: 2 4 5 6

Providing wider sidewalks and bicycle facilities was identified as a community need, especially connecting to the transit center and downtown. Potential solutions identified include widening sidewalks on Vista Village Drive, a Class IV bikeway connector to the Vista Transit Center, a green street bicycle connection extending Los Angeles Drive, and Class II bike lanes on Civic Center Drive.

TRAFFIC AND RAIL SEPARATION

Proposed Work Areas: 3 4

Grade separation can reconnect neighborhoods across the SPRINTER corridor; however, a grade separation is a long, complex undertaking that requires substantial funding and resources and can take considerable time to implement. Potential solutions identified include the Buena Vista Creek Trail connecting parks and the planned Inland Rail Trail and a long-term grade separation at Vista Village Drive and Main Street, for which the City of Vista grade separation study recommended an aerial track.

SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS

No standalone signal solution is listed separately in the matrix for this focus area. Crossing safety is addressed through rail crossing enhancements and new crossings.

BARRIERS/BARRIER CLOSURES

No barrier closure or highway/ramp removal solution applies to this focus area whose barrier is the SPRINTER rail corridor.

SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT

The Vista Village Drive and Main Street crossing is a key location for improvements. In the near term, enhanced pedestrian-scale lighting, wider sidewalks, and a Class IV bikeway connector to the Vista Transit Center can make the crossing safer and more comfortable. The city’s grade separation study points to a longer-term aerial track once funding for future phases is secured.

A Starting Point

The Reconnecting Communities study is the first step in identifying ideas that could help improve access in the seven focus areas. While there is a shared desire to advance these ideas, broader regional coordination and additional studies are needed. This study is a starting point for future planning coordination and potential investment and gives local jurisdictions and regional partners a shared foundation to pursue future opportunities as they arise.



How Ideas Become Projects

How each of these ideas advance will depend on priorities, agency roles, community support, available funding, technical feasibility, and project readiness.



STEP 1:
Define Lead Agency and Partnership Strategies
Clarify which agency or partner will take the next step to inform plans.



STEP 2:
Develop Community Partnerships
Identify community sponsors, community-based organizations, and other implementation partners who will advance community conversations.



STEP 3:
Refine the Sample Solutions
Turn concepts into engineered design packages, conduct traffic studies, environmental review, and other technical analyses.



STEP 4:
Move Toward Phased Implementation
Start with near-term improvements, then advance larger projects as funding and design work progresses.



STEP 5:
Pursue Grants and Funding
Identify federal, state, local, public-private, and other funding sources and prepare competitive grant applications.

SANDAG

SANDAG.org



SANDAGregion



SANDAG



SANDAGregion



SANDAGregion



SANDAG