

5 Mobility



5.1. Introduction

OVERVIEW

This section describes the existing and planned mobility system for the Mid-City communities. It describes the ability of the community to walk or roll to transit, parks, schools, and recreation centers and highlights gaps in pedestrian accessibility. It also describes the existing and planned bike network, existing and planned transit network, and existing and planned vehicular network making up the entire mobility system. Lastly, it identifies areas of concern for street safety based on pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular collisions.

5.2. Pedestrian Walkability

The pedestrian environment affects an entire community as most trips begin or end by walking and rolling, whether to transit to a store or from a parked car to a building. Most people prefer walking/rolling in places where there are sidewalks shaded with trees, lighting, interesting buildings or scenery to look at, other people outside, quality neighborhood destinations, and a feeling of safety. Pedestrian improvements in areas with land uses within close proximity that promote pedestrian activities can help to increase walking/rolling as a means of transportation and recreation. Land use and street design recommendations that benefit pedestrians also contribute to the overall quality, vitality and sense of community of neighborhoods.

Within Mid-City, walkability is partially a function of block structure and topography. Walkability is highest where block size is smaller, proximity between residential areas and destinations is shorter, sidewalk continuity is greater, sidewalks are in good condition and generally flat (or less steep). Older neighborhoods, such as City Heights, Normal Heights, and parts of Kensington-Talmadge, contain examples of this type of block structure. In areas where residents have to walk long distances to access goods and services and/or sidewalks do not exist, walkability is lower.

Figure 5-1 shows the walkability (approximately a 5, 10, and 15-minute walk) of major community facilities, including libraries, schools, colleges, recreation centers, parks and open spaces. Figure 5-2 shows the walkability to grocery stores and markets.

Mid-City is physically divided by I-805, SR-15, and SR-94, as well as the many canyons and steep topography, all of which disrupt the grid network and limit access, and are a major barrier to pedestrians wishing to walk between the planning area and adjacent communities.

There are limited street or pedestrian bridge crossings over these highways, thus limiting connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods. Similarly, existing canyons provide a topographical barrier to walkability between communities in the Mid-City planning area. Few streets cross these canyons, and while trails traverse some of them, they are primarily used for recreation rather than transportation.

Mid-City is physically divided by I-805, SR-15, and SR-94, as well as the many canyons and steep topography, all of which disrupt the grid network and limit access and are a major barrier to pedestrians wishing to walk between the planning area and adjacent communities.



Wide, shaded sidewalks along Adams Avenue in Normal Heights



People walking together in City Heights



Heavy foot traffic at the intersection of University and Fairmount Avenues

Figure 5-1 Walkability to Community Facilities

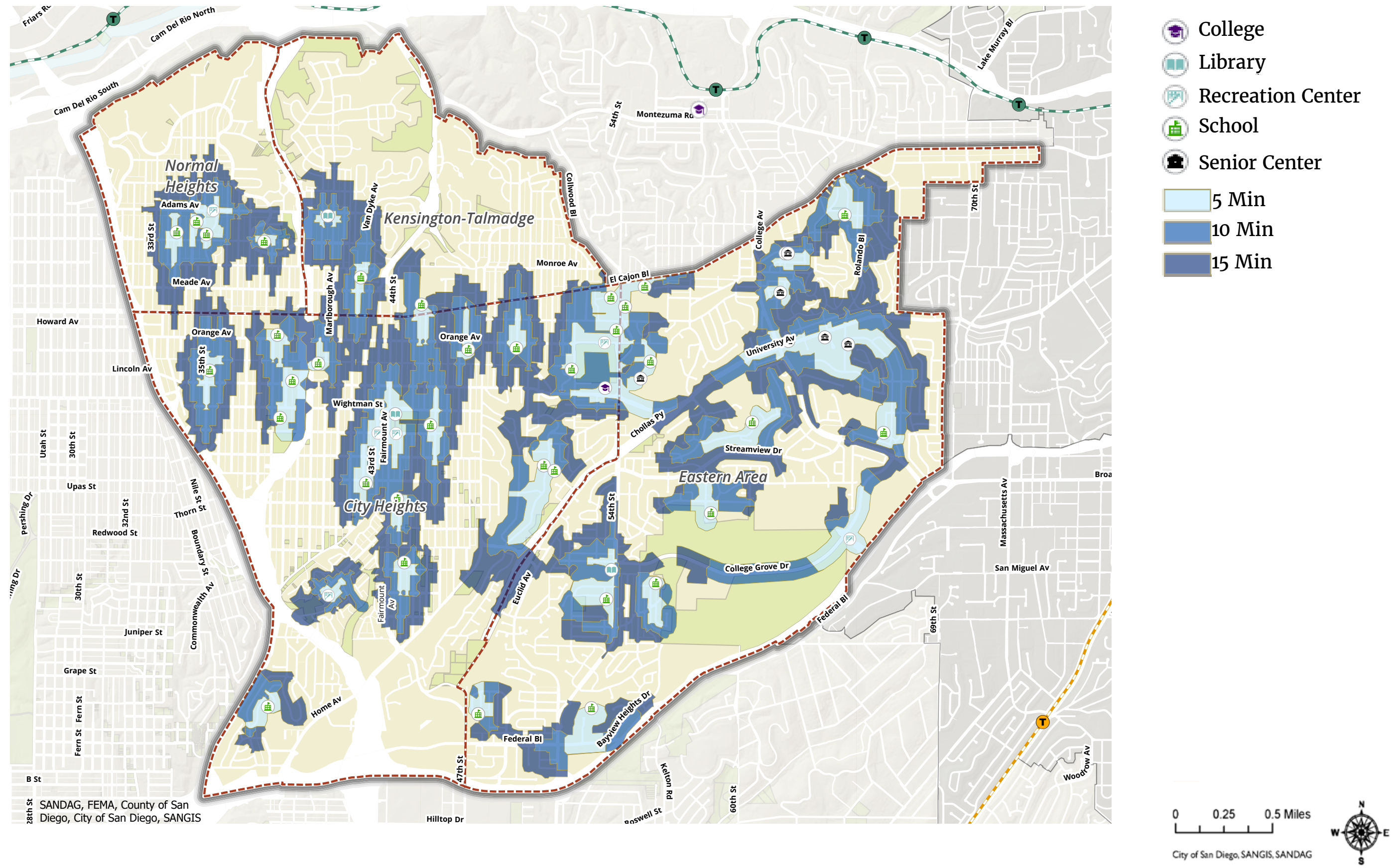
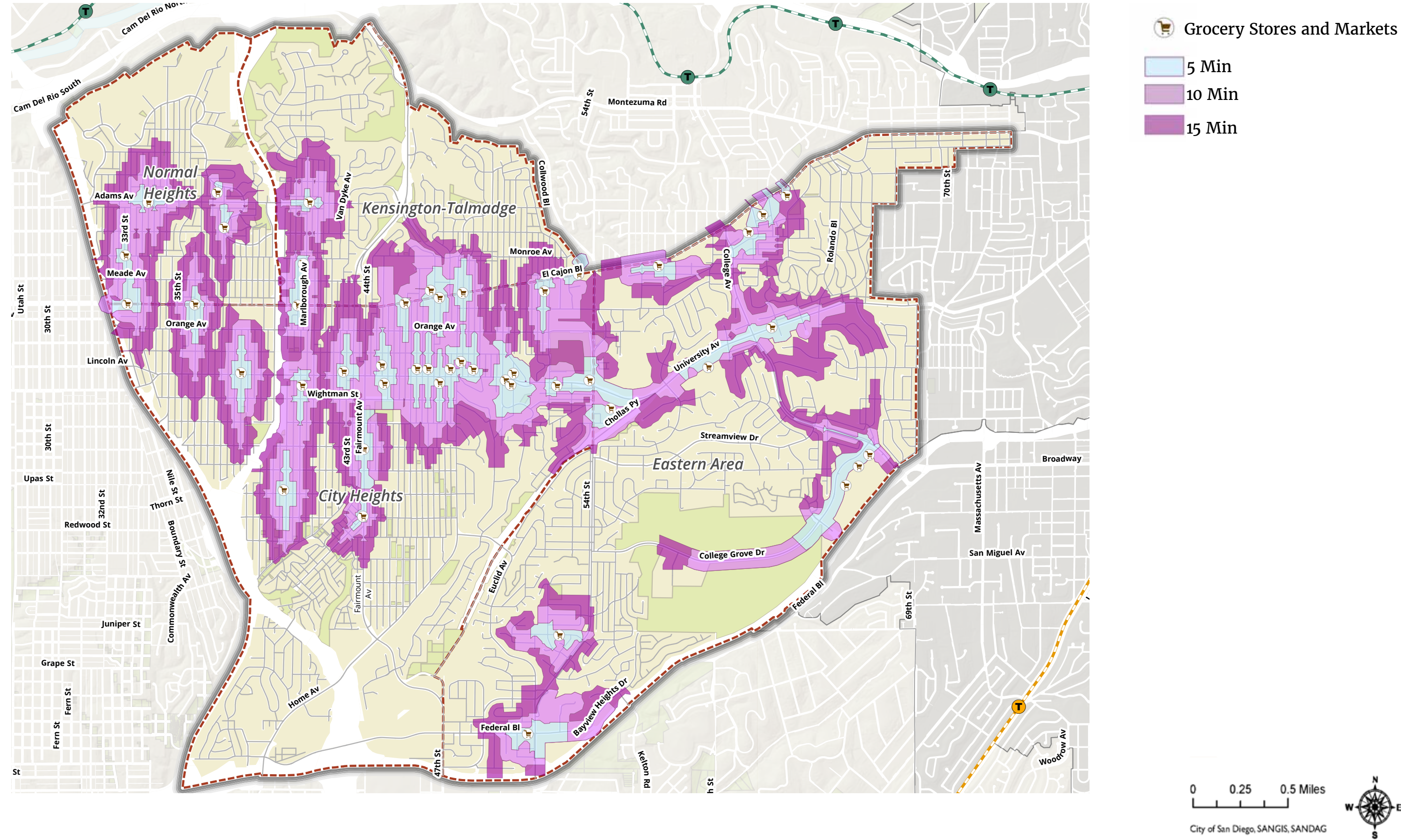


Figure 5-2 Walkability to Grocery Stores and Markets



5.3. Existing Bikeway Network

Bicycling is a low-cost and energy-efficient mode of transportation and has been growing in popularity within the San Diego region as communities work to create a more balanced transportation system. The City of San Diego updated its Bicycle Master Plan in 2013 to address this growing popularity by identifying key infrastructure upgrades, bicycle program recommendations, and implementation and funding opportunities. The Bicycle Master Plan identified most of the area within Mid-City as a medium to high bicycle trip generator area, meaning relative to other areas of the City residents and visitors to the area are more likely to use bicycles as a means to get around. The existing bicycle network is shown in Figure 5-3. The City is beginning a new update to its Bicycle Master Plan in 2024 that will refresh the City's bicycle facility recommendations and prioritization of active transportation projects to meet the City's Strategic Plan and Climate Action Plan goals with increased emphasis on equity and serving areas with the greatest needs.

EXISTING BIKEWAY NETWORK

Bikeways are classified based on Caltrans’ California Highway Design Manual with the exception of Bicycle Boulevards. A brief description of each bikeway class is provided below.

Class I - Bike Path

Bike paths, also termed shared-use or multi-use paths, are paved right-of-way for exclusive use by bicyclists, pedestrians, and those using non-motorized modes of travel. They are physically separated from vehicular traffic and can be constructed in the roadway right-of-way or an exclusive right-of way.

Class II - Bike Lane

Bike lanes are defined by pavement striping and signage used to allocate a portion of a roadway for exclusive or preferential bicycle travel. Bike lanes are one-way facilities on either side of a roadway. Bike Lanes may be enhanced with treatments that improve safety and connectivity, such as additional warning or wayfinding signage.

Class III - Bike Route

Bike routes provide shared use with motor vehicle traffic within the same travel lane. Bike Routes are designated with signs and may include “sharrows” or shared lane markings to delineate that the road is a shared-use facility.

Class IV - Separated Bikeway

Separated Bikeways are on-street bicycle facilities that include a vertical physical barrier between the bikeway and moving traffic, such as flexible bollards, a raised curb, on-street parking, or planter boxes. Separated bikeways may also be referred to as “cycle tracks,” or “protected bike lanes.”

Bicycle Boulevards

Bicycle boulevards are local roads or residential streets that accommodate bicyclists and motorists in the same travel lanes and are enhanced with traffic calming treatments to facilitate safe bicycle travel. Bicycle Boulevard treatments include signage, pavement markings, intersection treatments, traffic calming measures and can include traffic diversions.

As shown in Figure 5-3, the existing bike network in Mid-City is primarily a combination of Class II and Class III facilities, with some Class I and Bicycle Boulevard facilities clustered in the western portion of the planning area. The regional bikeways, which provide the majority of bicycle connectivity within the Plan Area are described in more detail below.

REGIONAL BIKEWAYS

The Mid-City planning area includes the following five regional bikeways:

Meade Ave Bikeway

The Meade Ave Bikeway is a Bicycle Boulevard that connects University Heights, North Park, Normal Heights, and Kensington and includes buffered bike lanes, neighborhood traffic circles, raised crosswalks, and other traffic calming measures designed to make the streets more pleasant for everyone. The bikeway runs along Meade Ave between Park Boulevard and Fairmount Avenue. The bikeway will provide connections to other regional bikeways.

Landis Street Bikeway

The Landis Bikeway is a Bicycle Boulevard that provides a vital connection between North Park and City Heights. The bikeway runs along Landis Street between Alabama Street and Chamoune Avenue. Features include buffered bike lanes, raised crosswalks, reverse angle parking, and traffic calming features.

Orange Ave Bikeway

The 2.1-mile Orange Bikeway runs along Orange Avenue, between 32nd Street and Estrella Avenue. The bikeway provides important connections to several regional bikeways including Howard Bikeway to the west, University Bikeway to the east, and Central Avenue Bikeway in the center. Features include buffered bike lanes, median island traffic diverters, neighborhood traffic circles, curb extensions, and other traffic calming measures.



Meade Avenue Bikeway

University Ave Bikeway

The University Bikeway provides a vital connection within Mid-City Plan Area, connecting to downtown San Diego and the City of La Mesa. The University Bikeway will run along University Avenue, between Estrella Avenue and 70th Street and provides an important connection to the Orange Ave Bikeway to the west.

Central Ave Bikeway

The Central Ave Bikeway includes two segments. The first segment includes a 1.1 mile long segment that runs between Camino Del Rio South and Adams Avenue along SR-15 and is separated from traffic. The other segment is a 1.2 mile segment of bike boulevard that begins in Kensington where the other segment ends at Adams Avenue and continues south, parallel to SR-15, along Terrace and Central avenues to Landis Street.

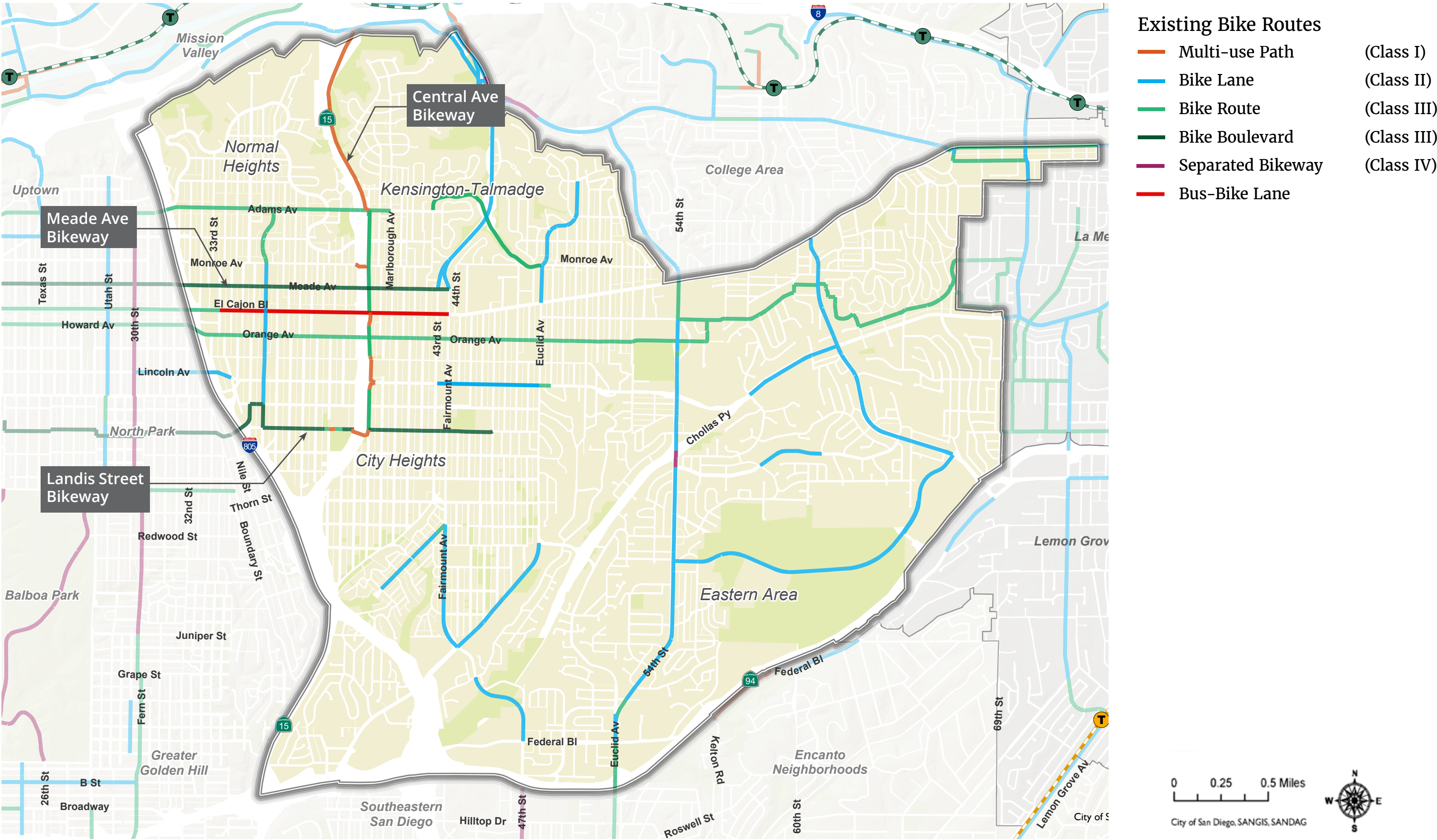
PLANNED BIKEWAY NETWORK

Bikeways are primarily planned and constructed by the City to implement the City of San Diego Bicycle Master Plan and by SANDAG as part of its North Park I Mid-City Bikeways Regional Bikeway Project. The list below highlights the proposed bikeways in the Mid-City.

- Central Avenue Bikeway
- Orange Avenue Bikeway
- University Bikeway
- El Cajon Boulevard Bike Lane
- Monroe Bikeway
- Federal Boulevard De-Channelization and Trail Project
- Chollas Creek Watershed Regional Park Master Plan

In addition to the proposed bikeway, the City is planning other amenities and programs to encourage cycling within the city as part of its Bicycle Master Plan. Additional amenities include high-volume bicycle parking, bike loop detectors, and bike share stations. Programs include safe routes to schools programming, police officer trainings and a bike commuter challenge.

Figure 5-3 Existing Bikeway Network



5.4. Existing Transit Network

EXISTING TRANSIT NETWORK

Local and rapid bus service provides public transit within Mid-City, as shown in Figure 5-4. Buses offer connections to trolley stops outside the planning area and the greater San Diego region. Local bus service headway times vary by route from 15 minutes to 30 minutes between buses at peak commute times. Generally, the 800 and 900 numbered routes have longer waiting times between buses than the lower-numbered routes. Privately owned shared micro-mobility services provide transportation options outside of fixed bus route service. Recent efforts to provide quicker transit connectivity within the planning area are described below.

RAPID BUS SERVICE

Rapid bus service is a high-frequency, limited-stop bus service that connects major destinations across San Diego. The planning area is served by two rapid bus lines, Rapid 215 and Rapid 235. Rapid 215 runs at 10 minute headways at peak commute times along an approximately 9.5 mile route that connects San Diego State University with Downtown San Diego via El Cajon Boulevard. Rapid 235 runs at 15 minute headways at peak commute times along an approximately 36 mile route from Escondido Transit Center to Downtown San Diego via SR-15. The Boulevard Transit Plaza and City

Heights Transit Plaza provide key connection points between bus lines, particularly between the Rapid 235 which runs below street level along dedicated freeway lanes and the other bus lines that run at street level. Due to the long route distance and dedicated freeway lanes, the Rapid 235 acts as a commuter rapid bus line for communities both within and outside of San Diego, where as the Rapid 215 provides express bus service to communities within San Diego, including the Mid-City planning area.

THE BOULEVARD BUS WAY

The Boulevard Bus Way is an approximately three-mile painted dedicated bus lane for Rapid 215, Route 1, and Route 6 along El Cajon Boulevard between Park Boulevard and Fairmont Avenue. Vehicles are prohibited from entering the dedicated bus lanes except for accessing curbside parking or loading, or to make right-hand turns. Bicycles are permitted to use the dedicated bus lane as is indicated by sharrow markings along the length of the lane. Challenges to maintaining high-frequency bus service along the bus way include a lack of enforcement and limited infrastructure. Currently, there is no automated enforcement or physical separation of the dedicated bus lane. Additionally, the bus lane spans three miles of El Cajon Boulevard, which accounts for only a portion of the bus routes that use it. Lastly, other infrastructure elements traditionally included in high-frequency bus service, such as bus bulbs, off-board fare collection, all-door boarding, signal prioritization and real-time bus tracking displays, have not been implemented.

MICRO-TRANSIT

Micro-Transit is a multi-passenger shuttle that can carry up to 15 passengers and provide rides within a defined service area. A new neighborhood shuttle will start operation in North Park and City Heights in 2024.

PLANNED TRANSIT NETWORK

SANDAG’s 2021 Regional Plan identified five big moves to improve the San Diego region’s transportation system all of which will have impacts to the transit network within the Mid-City planning area. The five big moves are:

Complete Corridors

Dedicating safe space on roadways for everyone, including people who walk/roll, bike, drive, ride transit and use Flexible Fleets.

Flexible Fleets

Incorporating transportation services of many forms, varying in size from bikes to scooters to shuttles, that offer first- and last-mile connections to transit and alternatives to driving alone.

Mobility Hubs

Planning vibrant centers of activity where transit and on-demand travel options, supported by safe streets, connect people with their destinations and businesses with their customers.

Next Operating System (OS)

Developing a digital platform that allows people to connect to transportation services and for dynamic management of roadways and transit services.

Transit Leap

Creating a network of fast, convenient, and reliable transit services that connect people from where they live to where they want to go.

The Transit Leap big move also identifies potential future commuter rail lines and Next Gen Rapid bus service lines. Commuter rail service is envisioned to use high-speed trains, operating every 5 to 10 minutes to connect major residential areas with employment centers, commercial areas, and other popular destinations. Next Gen Rapid bus service proposes a high-tech bus fleet operating in priority lanes and making use of better signal technology to run with 10 minute headways. Bus routes within the Mid-City Plan Area that have been identified for Next Gen Rapid service include:

- Route 10
- Route 215
- Route 235
- Route 295 (New Route)
- Route 625 (New Route)

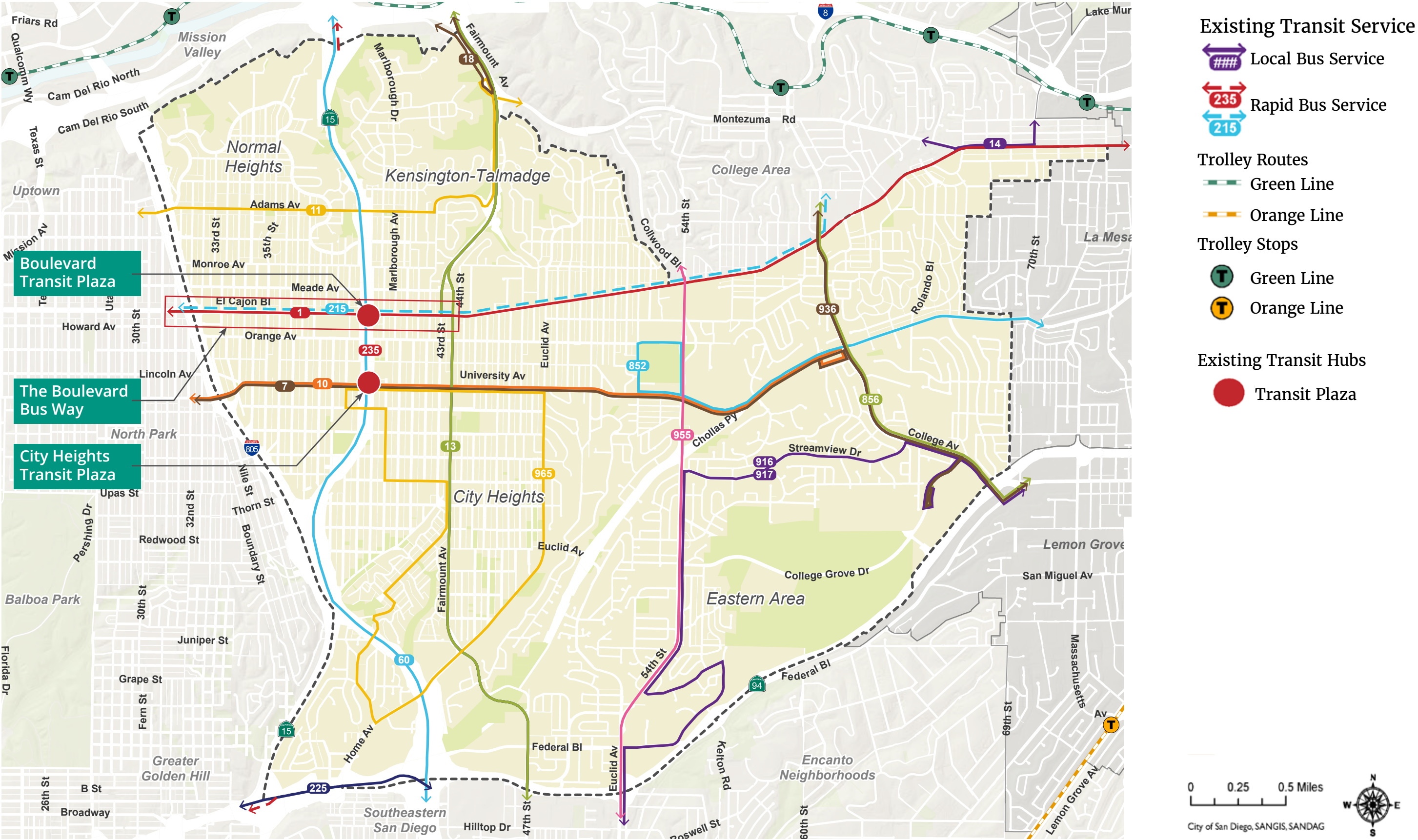


Boulevard Transit Plaza



The Boulevard Bus Way, El Cajon Boulevard

Figure 5-4 Existing Transit Network



5.5. Freeway and Street Network

The freeway and street network form the basis for mobility within and into or out of the planning area, given that vehicles, bus service, bicycles, and pedestrians all use the network to get around. The street and freeway network also connects to other mobility options, such as the trolley and intercity rail outside of Mid-City. The street and freeway network plays a large role in shaping communities, often defining the boundaries, edges and connections between neighborhoods.

The rest of this section describes the freeway and street network from a vehicular perspective, while later sections describe how pedestrians, bicycles and transit are accommodated within this network. The existing street classifications within the Mid-City Communities Plan are shown in Figure 5-5.

FREEWAY NETWORK

Mid-City is bounded by Interstate 805 (I-805) and State Route 15 (SR-15) to the west, which weave together and then cross at the west edge of the planning area. Portions of SR-15 to the north of this area and I-805 to the south limit access and create large physical separations and barriers, particularly in City Heights and between Normal Heights and Kensington-Talmadge. State Route 94 (SR-94) defines the boundary of the planning area to the south and Interstate 8 (I-8) to the north.

There are interchanges between I-805, SR-15 and SR-94 that occur in the southwest corner of the planning area, defining a triangle shape of the neighborhood generally known as Fairmount Park. Interchanges between I-805, SR-15, and I-8 occur along the northwest corner, just outside of the planning area. I-8 can also be accessed easily from the northern and eastern areas via other routes that pass through the College Community Plan Area and the City of La Mesa.

Interstate 805

I-805 generally runs north/south through and along Mid-City and has five travel lanes in the southbound direction and four travel lanes in the northbound direction. Access points to I-805 occur along the following streets:

- Madison Ave
- El Cajon Blvd
- University Ave/Wabash Ave/Boundary St/N Park Way
- Home Ave

State Route 15

SR-15 runs north/south in Mid-City and has five vehicle travel lanes in the southbound direction, four vehicle travel lanes in the northbound direction, and two center-running, bus-only lanes providing Rapid 235 bus service in both directions. North of its junction with I-8, SR 15 becomes Interstate 15, extending north through San Diego County. Vehicular access points to SR-15 occur along the following streets:

- Adams Ave/40th St
- El Cajon Blvd
- University Ave

State Route 94

SR-94, also known as the Martin Luther King Jr. Freeway, runs generally east/west on the southern edge of the planning area and has four travel lanes in both directions. Access points to SR-94 occur along the following streets:

- Home Ave
- 47th St/A St
- Euclid Ave
- Kelton Rd
- College Grove Way
- College Ave
- A Street/49th Street



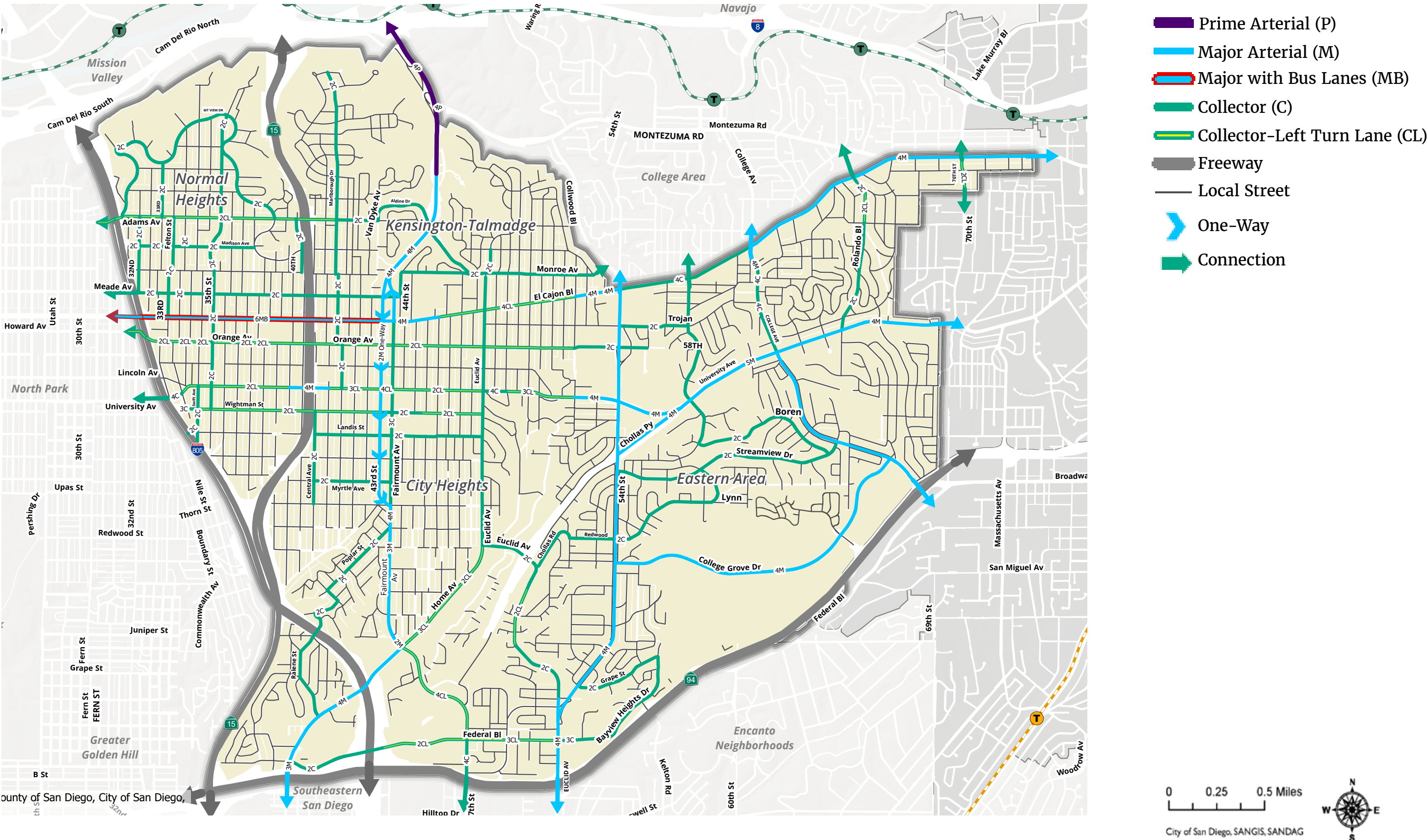
A view of SR-15 from Normal Heights

MAJOR CORRIDORS

Major corridors include segments classified as Six-Lane Major, Five-Lane Major, Four-Lane Major, Three-Lane Major, and Two-Lane Major (One-Way). These routes provide access throughout the community, connecting to the freeway network, and are some of the critical connections over the freeways and canyons that shape the planning area. Examples of major corridors include:

- El Cajon Blvd
- University Avenue
- Home Ave
- Fairmount Ave
- 54th Street and Euclid Av Freeway Access
- 47th Street / Fairmount Av
- College Ave

Figure 5-5 Existing Functional Roadway Classifications



5.6. Street Safety

In 2015, San Diego committed to Vision Zero, which is a street safety policy that promotes safe roadway design to prevent collisions resulting in severe injury or death while being forgiving towards roadway user mistakes. Based on crash data analysis summarized in the Systemic Safety Analysis Report, the City published a Vision Zero Strategic Plan 2020-2025 that outlines short and long term goals for safer streets. Among those goals are prioritizing safe infrastructure improvements at intersections, where a majority of severe injury and fatal crashes occur. Below is an overview of pedestrian and bicycle crash data for the Mid-City planning area and existing city and community initiatives to address street safety.¹

COLLISIONS INVOLVING PEDESTRIANS OR BICYCLISTS

Within Mid-City, there were approximately 316 collisions involving a pedestrian occurring over a five-year period between 2018 and 2022. Of those collisions, 55 resulted in a fatality or severe injury as shown in Figure 5-6. A heatmap showing the concentration of pedestrian crashes resulting in injury within the planning area is shown in Figure 5-7. The intersections with the most pedestrian collisions were concentrated along El Cajon Boulevard, University Avenue, Fairmount Avenue and Euclid Ave/54th Street. Intersections with severe pedestrian injuries or fatalities are also clustered along these corridors as well as at the entrances and exits to freeways in the planning area.

The following intersection locations experienced 2 or more pedestrian collisions resulting in a serious injury or death during the 5-year study period:

- El Cajon Boulevard and Altadena Avenue (3 collisions)
- Euclid Avenue and Federal Boulevard (2 collisions)
- Orange Avenue and Central Avenue (2 collisions)

Within Mid-City, there were 142 collisions involving a bicyclist occurring over a five-year period between 2018 and 2022. Of those collisions, 9 resulted in a fatality or severe injury, as shown in Figure 5-8.

CITY AND COMMUNITY STREET SAFETY INITIATIVES

The San Diego Vision Zero Strategic Plan 2020-2025 identified several street infrastructure improvements to increase safety for all roadway users at intersections, as follows.

High-Visibility Pedestrian Crosswalks

High-visibility pedestrian crosswalks use large scale bar patterns that are more visible from a distance than leader line crosswalks to both the driver of a vehicle and a pedestrian. Use of reflective material and yield to pedestrian signage make high-visibility crosswalks more effective in low-light or night conditions.

Rectangular Rapid-Flashing Beacon (RRFBs)

To enhance pedestrian conspicuity and increase driver awareness at uncontrolled, marked crosswalks, transportation agencies can install a pedestrian actuated RRFB to accompany a pedestrian warning sign. RRFBs consist of two, rectangular- shaped yellow indications, each with a light-emitting diode (LED)-array-based light source. RRFBs flash with an alternating high frequency when activated to enhance conspicuity of pedestrians at the crossing to drivers.

Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs)

A low-cost safety improvement for signalized intersections, LPIs give pedestrians a walk signal to cross the street a few seconds ahead of parallel vehicular traffic. This allows pedestrians to enter the crosswalk safely and makes them more visible to turning vehicles.

Roundabouts

Roundabouts are intersections where vehicle and bicycle traffic travels around a central island in a counter-clockwise direction. Vehicles or bicyclists entering the roundabout must yield to other vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians. Recessed, high-visibility pedestrian crosswalks are provided at the four entrances to the intersection. Roundabouts provide a higher level of roadway safety by reducing traffic speeds and eliminating left turns and other conflicts between cyclists, vehicles, and pedestrians.

Larger scale infrastructure improvements are typically completed under the City's Capital Improvement Program. An example of a successful capital improvement project within the planning area is the 50th St & University Ave Complete Streets and Gathering Project. This project utilized a participatory community planning process to improve pedestrian safety at the 50th Street and University Ave intersection. The City Heights Community Development Corporation worked with the Somali-American community to design a new pedestrian crossing and gathering space at the intersection that reflects the area's East African identity. The infrastructure improvement portion of the project was implemented in two phases: a pilot version utilizing paint and traffic cones, and a permanent version with wider concrete sidewalks, a concrete median and a high-visibility crosswalk.



Roundabout, Meade Avenue



50th St and University Ave Complete Streets and Gathering Project
Source: City Heights Community Development, cityheightscdc.org



Bike boxes and conflict striping in City Heights

¹ <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2024-11/mid-city-cpu-draft-existing-conditions-mobility-assessment.pdf>

Figure 5-6 Pedestrian Fatalities and Severe Injuries

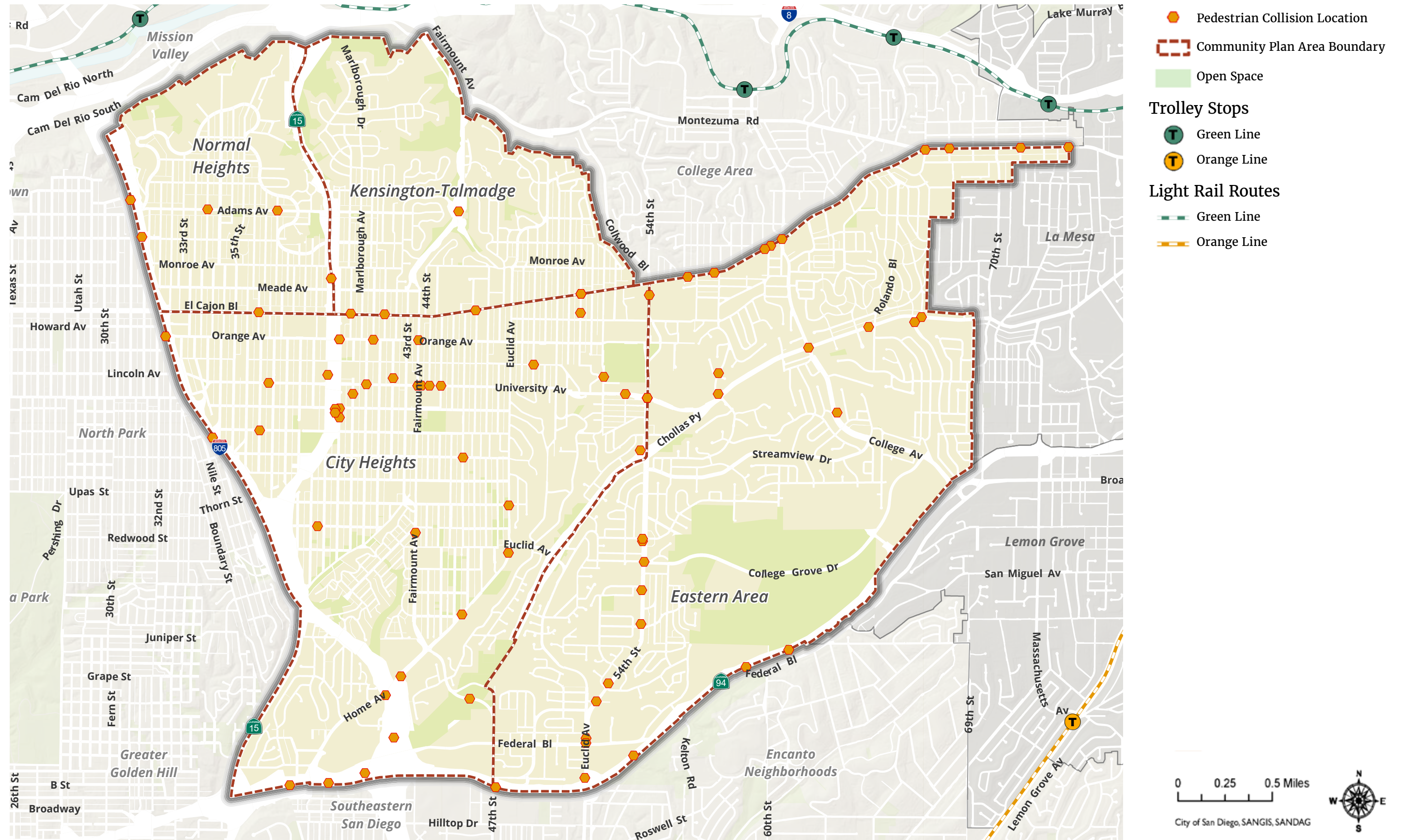


Figure 5-7 Pedestrian Collision Heatmap (All Collisions)

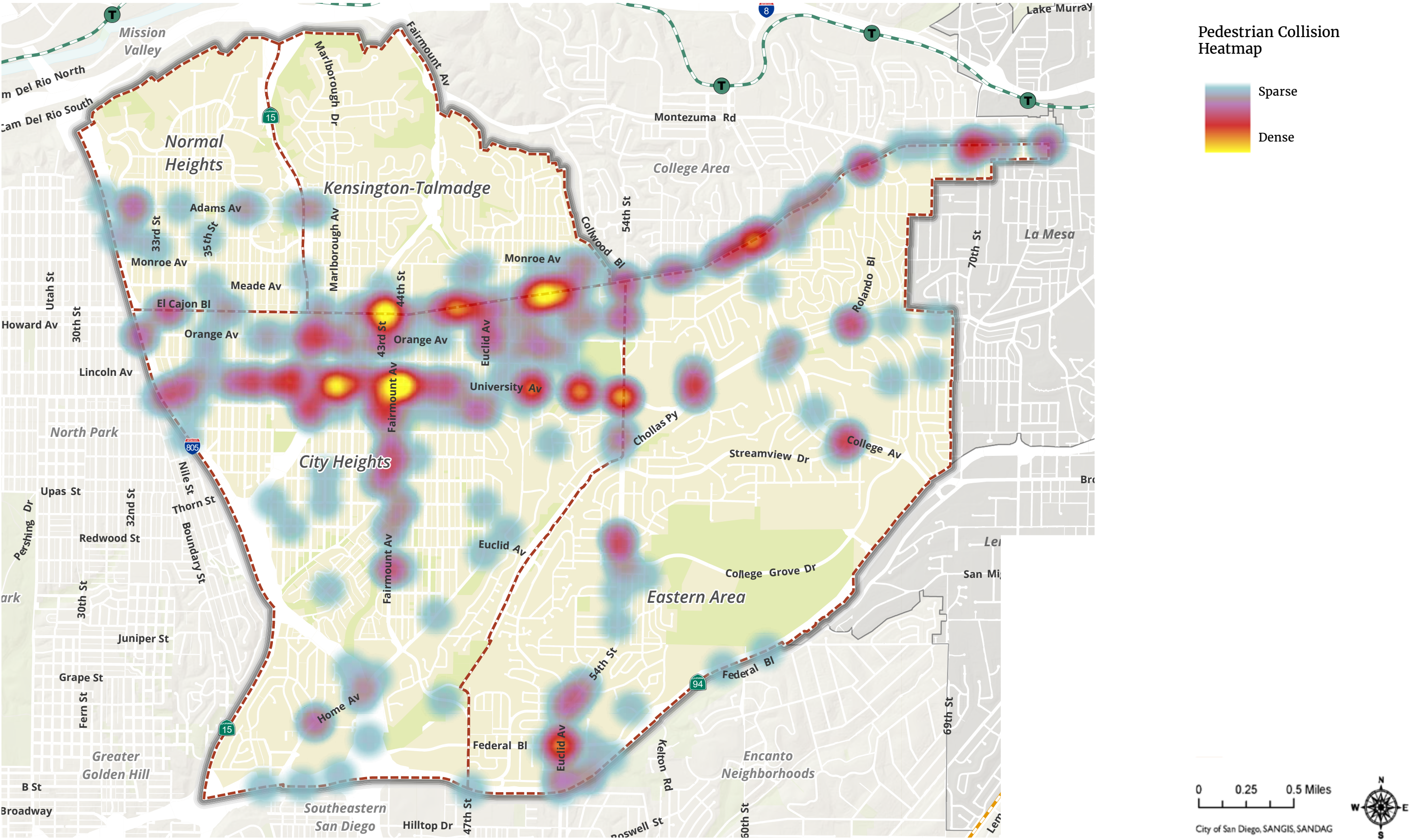
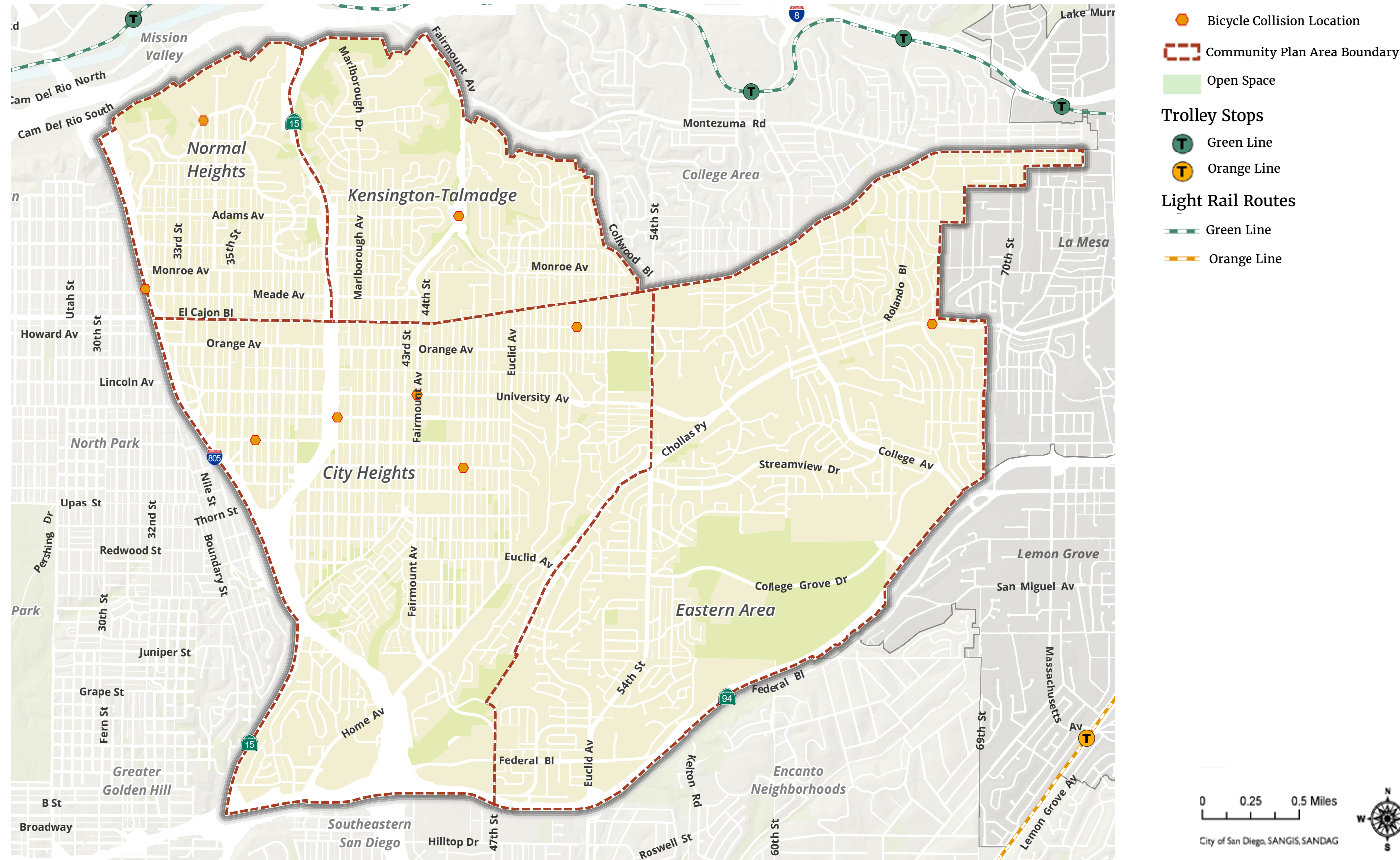


Figure 5-8 Bicycle Fatalities and Severe Injuries



5.7. Household Transportation Spending

Based on the most recent estimates from the US Census Bureau, approximately 64.9 percent of the workers living in the planning area commute to work by driving alone, while 10.7 percent carpooled, 4.8 percent take public transit, 3.3 percent walked and 0.7 percent bicycled. Over 8.8 percent of workers living in Mid-City either commute by walking, bicycling, or public transit. An average of 14.2 percent of workers in the Mid-City work from home, which is lower than the citywide average of 17.8 percent, and the countywide average of 16 percent.

The average commute length in minutes for a worker living in the Mid-City planning area is about 24.2 minutes. Approximately, 6.7 percent of people living in Mid-City have a commute of 10 minutes or less. Within the Mid-City, an average of 10 percent of households do not own a vehicle, slightly higher than the 6.4 percent of households with no vehicles citywide.

Figure 5-9 shows transportation costs as a percent of income. In the northern parts of the planning area, Normal Heights and Kensington-Talmadge households are spending 8 to 17.7 percent of their income on transportation costs, compared to 36.3 to 45.6 percent in central City Heights. In general, lower-income households in the US bear a larger percentage of their income on transportation costs compared to higher-income households.

“ Around 23 percent of workers in Mid-City either commute by walking, bicycling, transit or work from home.

Table 5-1 Means of Transportation to Work

Commute Mode Share	Mid-City	City of San Diego	San Diego County
Drove Alone	64.9%	64.3%	67.7%
Carpooled	10.7%	7.9%	8.2%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	4.8%	3.1%	2.1%
Walked	3.3%	4.4%	3.8%
Bicycle	0.7%	0.7%	0.5%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	1.5%	1.8%	1.8%
Worked from home	14.2%	17.8%	16.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019–2023 American Community Survey 5–Year Estimates. *Commuting Characteristics by Sex.* (ACSST5Y2023.So801)

Table 5-2 Travel Time to Work

	Mid-City	City of San Diego	San Diego County
Travel Time to Work Less than 10 minutes (percent)	6.7%	9.5%	9.1%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	24.2 min	23.5 min	25.7 min

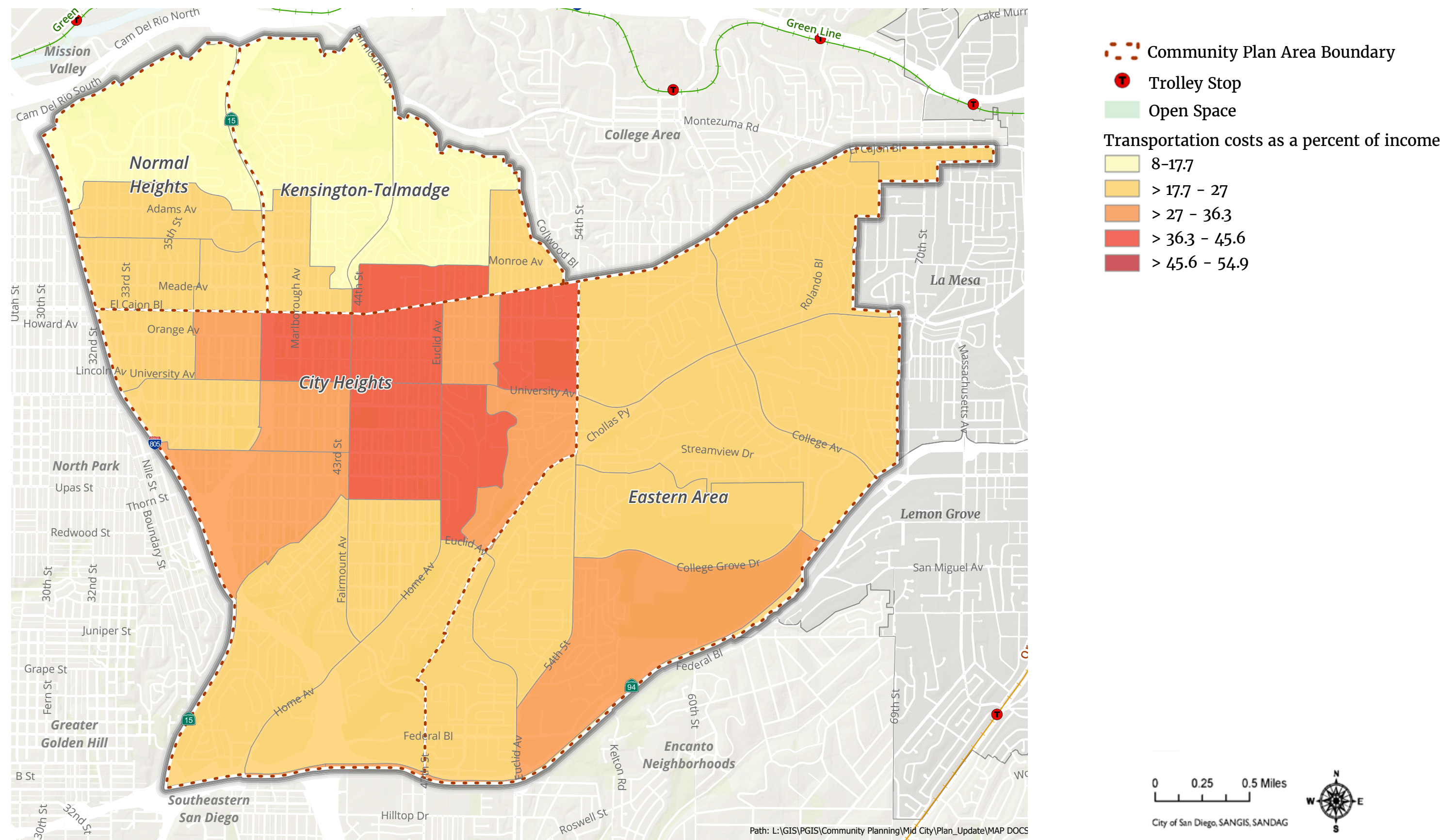
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019–2023 American Community Survey 5–Year Estimates. *Commuting Characteristics by Sex.* (ACSST5Y2023.So801)

Table 5-3 Vehicles Available

Vehicle(s) Available	Mid-City	City of San Diego	San Diego County
None	10.0%	6.4%	5.4%
1 vehicle	37.7%	35.1%	30.2%
2 vehicles	34.4%	38.8%	39.6%
3 or more vehicles	18.2%	19.8%	24.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019–2023 American Community Survey 5–Year Estimates. *Commuting Characteristics by Sex.* (ACSST5Y2023.So801)

Figure 5-9 Household Transportation Spending



5.8. Mobility Summary

This section summarizes the key information related to mobility for Mid-City planning area presented in this chapter.

- The **freeway and street network** form the basis of mobility in Mid-City.
- Existing **canyons and freeways provide the biggest barrier** to pedestrian walkability in Mid-City.
- Mid-City is a **medium to high bicycle trip generator area**.
- The existing bike network in Mid-City is primarily a combination of **Class II and Class III** facilities, although a series of **Bicycle Boulevards have recently been installed and are planned** for the coming years.
- Public transit within Mid-City is provided by **local and rapid bus service**.
- Challenges to maintaining high-frequency bus service along the El Cajon Boulevard bus way include **a lack of enforcement and limited infrastructure**.
- The intersections with the **most pedestrian collisions** were concentrated along **El Cajon Boulevard, University Avenue, Fairmount Avenue and Euclid Ave/54th Street**.
- Serious pedestrian injuries or fatalities are also clustered along the corridors listed above as well as at the **entrances and exits to freeways** in Mid-City.
- Around **23 percent of Mid-City workers** either **commute by walking, bicycling, public transit, or work from home**.



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