

CHAPTER 04

EXISTING CONDITIONS WITH AN EQUITY FOCUS

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One of the first steps in this planning process was gathering background information and data on existing conditions from the City, project partners, and public data sources—standard first steps in a planning process. However, in this case, the project team also took several additional steps:

- The racial equity leads on our project team gave the remainder of the extended team—City staff and consultant partners—a training on racial equity to establish shared definitions as well as explain why and how we were centering racial equity in this process.
- We gathered information on the City's history from a racial equity perspective, including the history of communities whose stories are rarely considered in city planning processes: Black, Indigenous, and other marginalized communities.
- And, we gathered information on existing conditions with an eye toward racial equity, asking questions about how existing transportation systems as well as new ones are serving the city's most vulnerable residents.

One of the things we quickly learned was that quantitative data does not tell the full story. Understanding where different populations live, and the level of investment found in those communities, provides a baseline understanding of the resources, benefits, or hazards people in different parts of San José are exposed to. However, conversations with community members provided a richer understanding of their lived experience and added context not evident in the charts and maps. We've integrated stories and insights shared in interviews, focus groups, online surveys, and virtual meetings throughout our analysis.

KEY POPULATIONS

The following sections include maps that show the location of key populations and their distance to transportation infrastructure. Each map is accompanied by a chart that summarizes the demographic characteristics for each impacted area (e.g., the number of people or households that live within a certain distance of a bike share station)—this is calculated using a weighted average for each demographic group for comparison. Charts and maps were produced using U.S. Census, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimate data. Key populations from this analysis include:

- Households experiencing poverty;
- Households with limited educational attainment (Less than high school education); and
- Households with limited English proficiency (LEP)

Below each map is a description of its purpose and the insights gleaned from that analysis and conversation with community members. The purpose of this analysis was to understand how past policy and planning decisions influenced the current design of these communities of San José’s transportation system. And, how that design has impacted the City’s BIPOC communities. Details on the methodology underlying the charts and maps can be found in the Appendix.

A note on populations examined: This analysis began with available quantitative data and attempted to fill in gaps through engagement with the ETF and targeted communities. We recognize that we did not hear from every community through this process and note that the unhoused in particular are not included in this analysis. Coordination with and consideration

of unhoused populations and those in permanent supportive housing will be needed to further understand the specific challenges and opportunities that emerging mobility may address moving forward. Like many communities engaged throughout this process, the concerns and needs of the unhoused will extend beyond the scope of this project. However, a deeper focus and analysis of how emerging mobility may impact the unhoused is necessary.



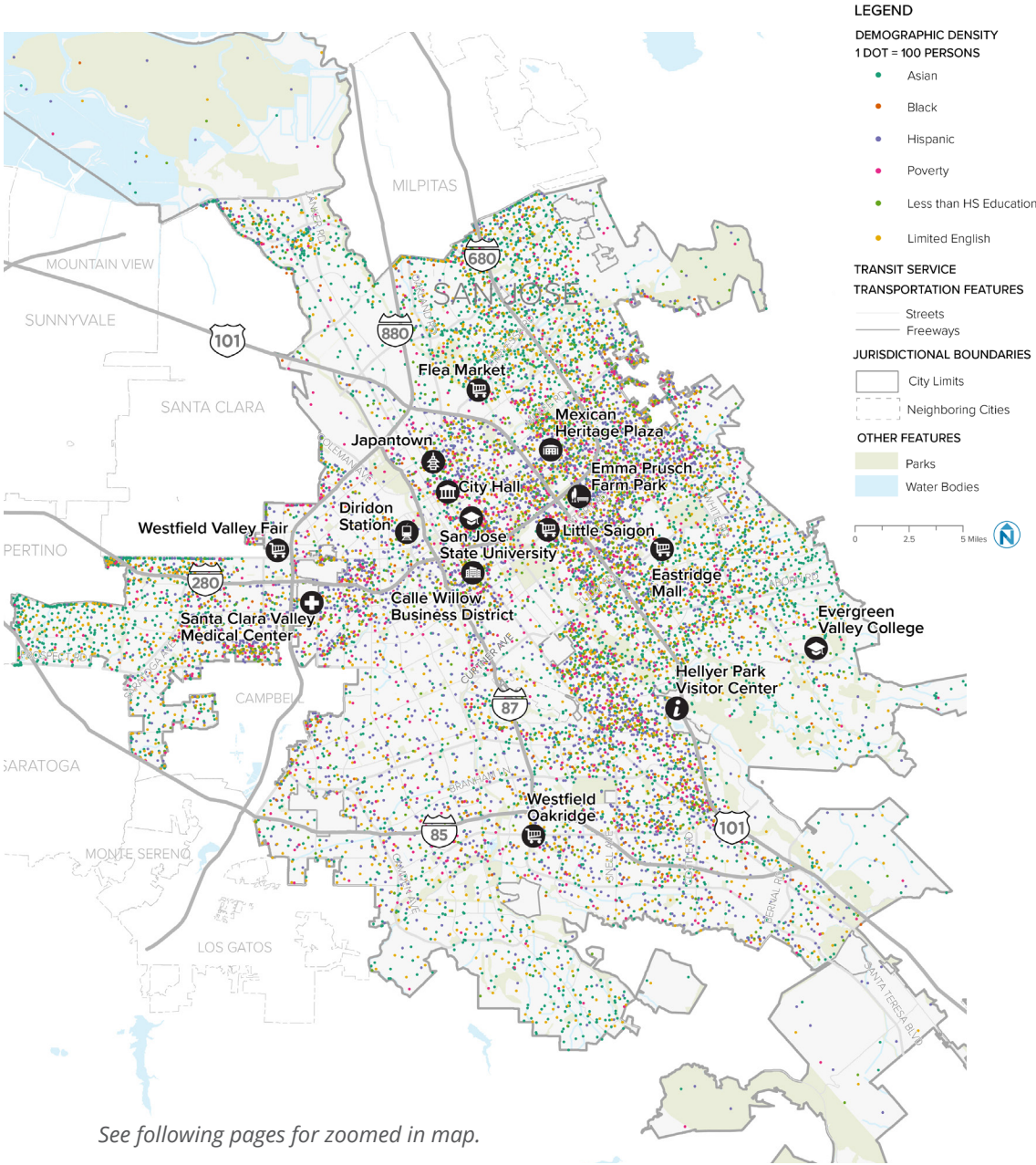
POPULATION DENSITY

What is population density?

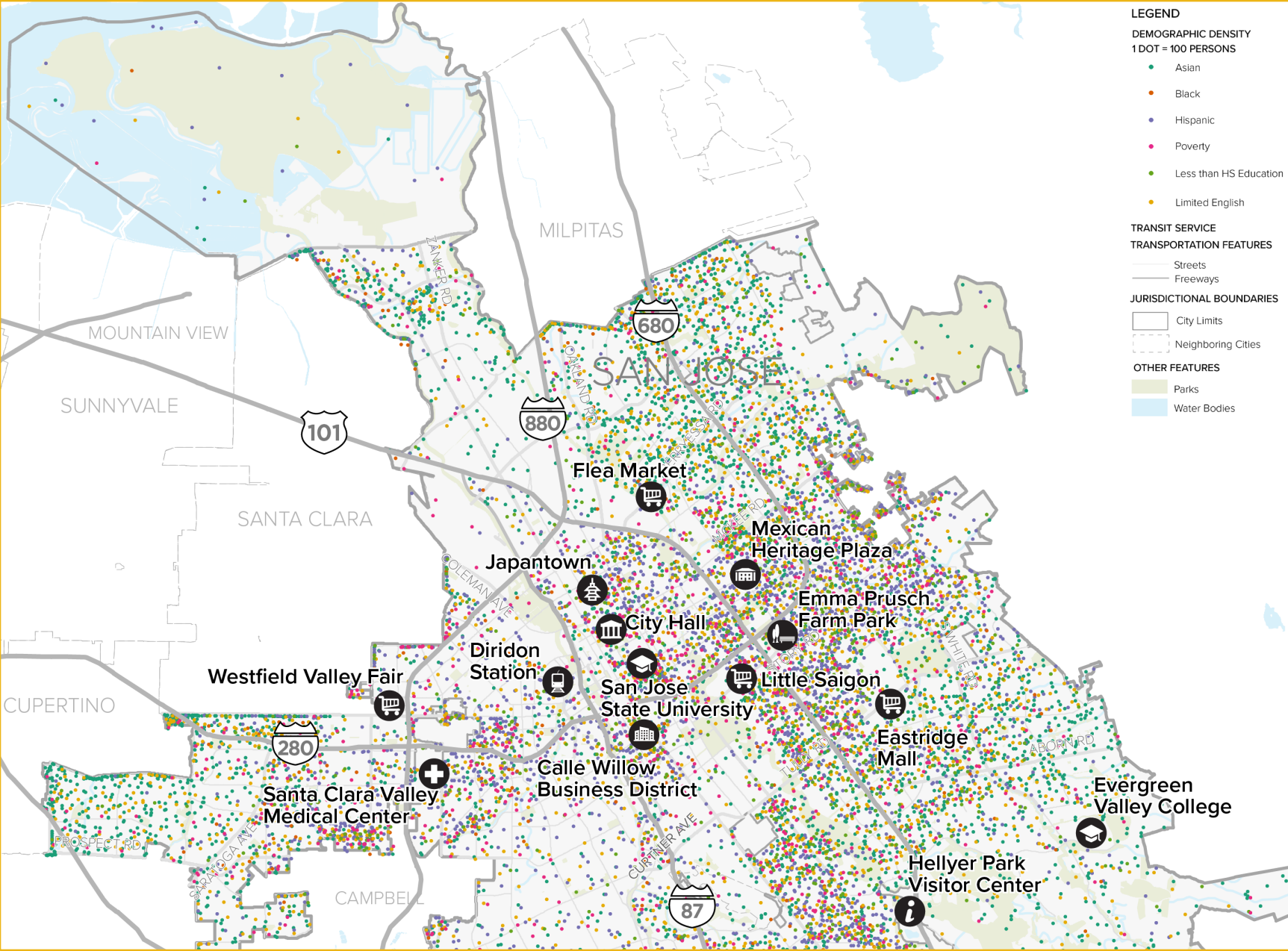
The map to the right shows where the city's key populations are located in San José. Knowing where communities are located provides insight into what resources they have access to and how that might compare to other communities.

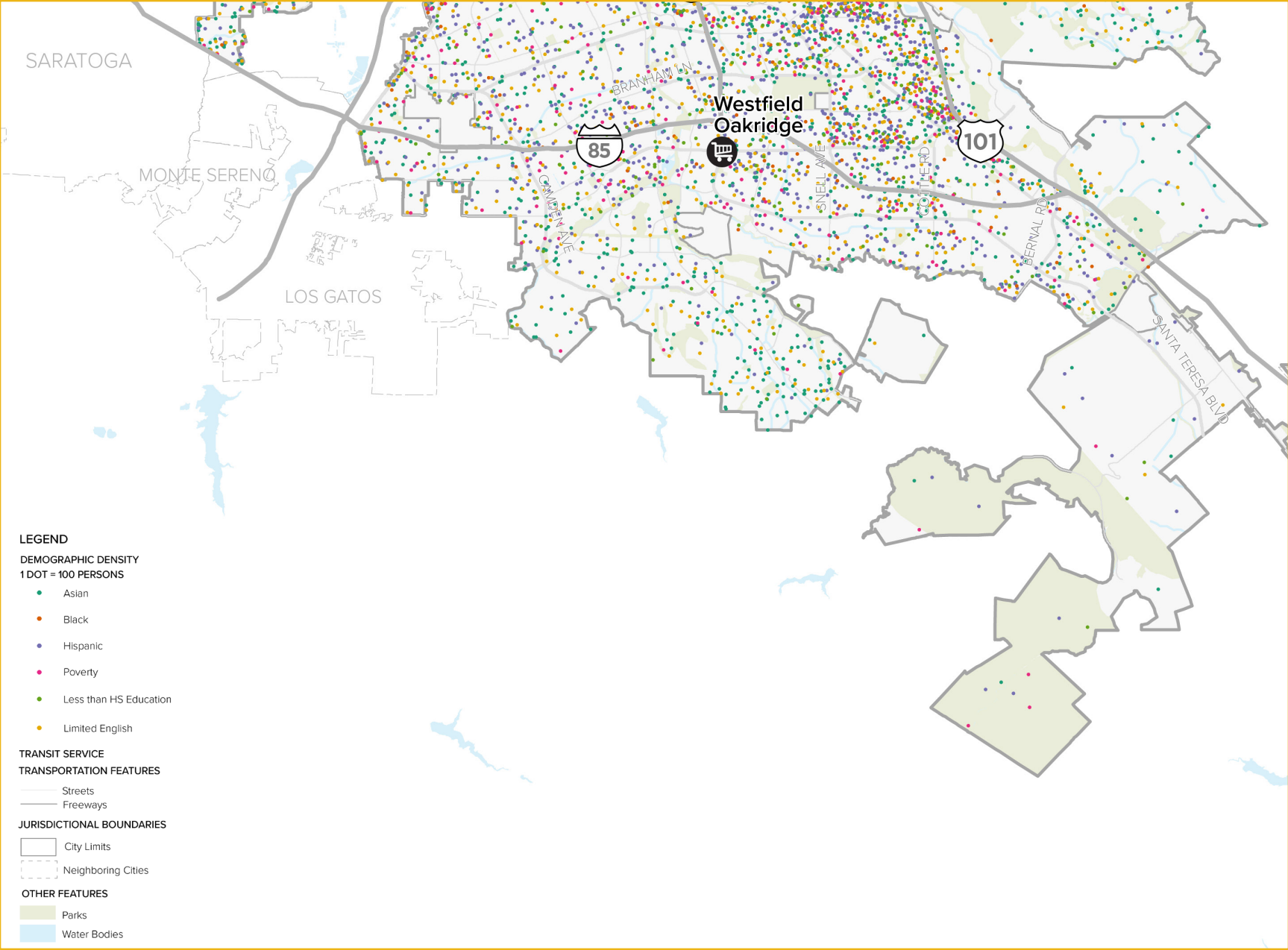


Source: San José Mercury News



See following pages for zoomed in map.





What did we find?

The city's Latinx community is primarily in East San José. The Black community is distributed across a number of neighborhoods. San José's diverse Asian community is scattered throughout the city, mostly in North and East San José—residents of the Vietnamese community are primarily north of Capitol Expressway and south of Tully Road and in neighborhoods like Silver Creek and Evergreen while residents of the Korean and Japanese communities are in West San José in neighborhoods bordering Cupertino and North San José. Residents of the Filipino and Chinese communities are mostly in North San José, East San José, and neighborhoods like Berryessa and Vinci South. The Indian community is primarily located in North San José, West San José in neighborhoods bordering Cupertino, and Evergreen.¹⁸

Households in poverty are concentrated in and around the greater Downtown and East San José. The majority of households with limited proficiency in English are in East San José, although there are pockets in West San José. Areas with low densities of BIPOC communities are those with high densities of white people (not shown).



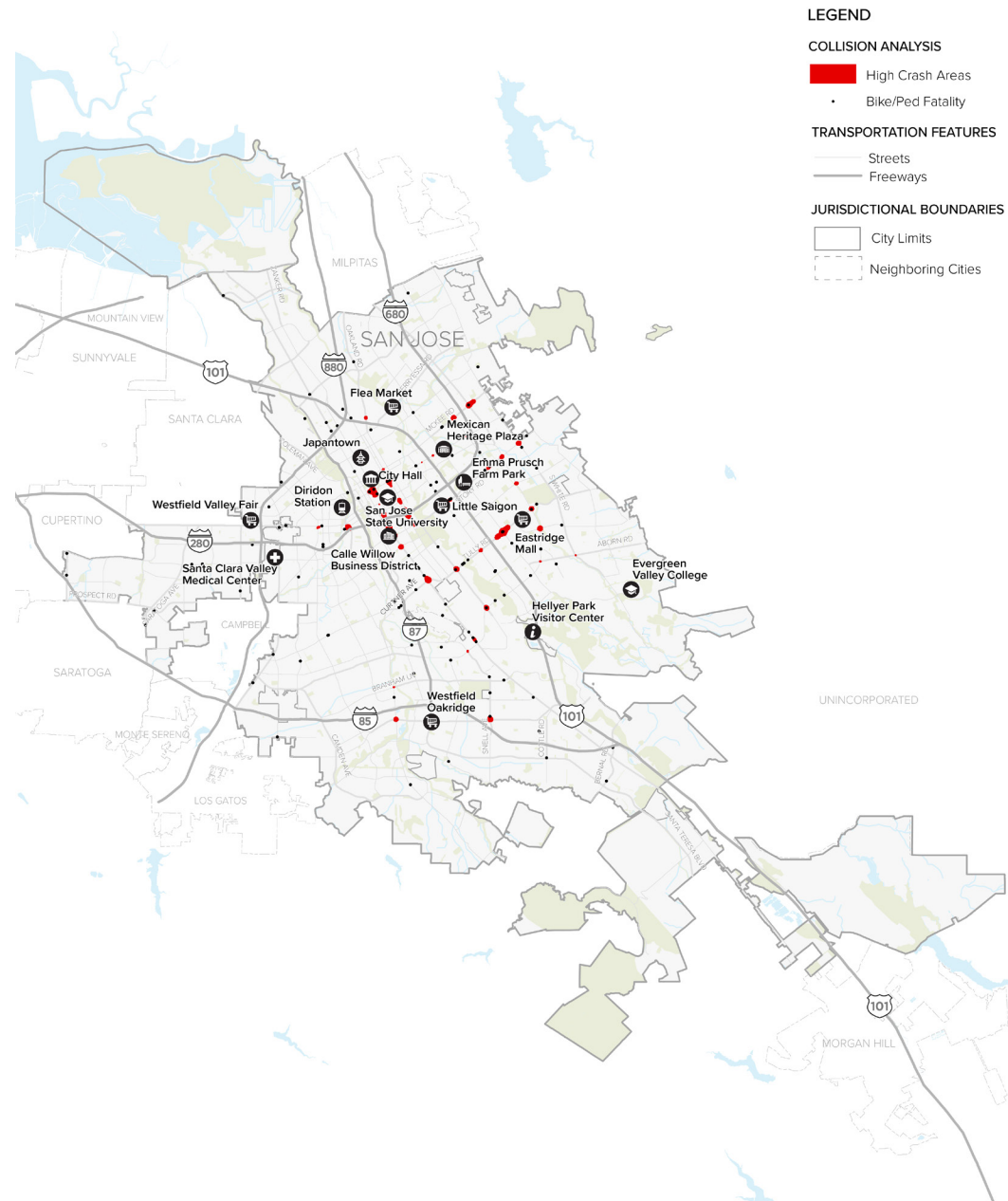
Source: Pmlydon

¹⁸ U.S. Census, American Community Survey (ACS), Demographic and Housing Estimates, 1-Year Estimates (2019). Note: ACS 1-year datasets is typically the most current, but not the most reliable dataset—it includes information collected over a 12-month period versus an ACS 5-year dataset, which includes data collected over a 60-month period. ACS 5-year datasets are therefore more statistically reliable due to the larger sample size and smaller margin of error, however, some 5-year datasets do not provide disaggregated information that is available for 1-year datasets.

HIGH CRASH AREAS

What is collision mapping?

Mapping traffic collisions helps illustrate where they occur most frequently. This map uses collision data obtained from the City and is based on the San José Police Department's traffic crash reports from the past five years. This enables the City to determine where investments are needed to improve safety. However, this map only illustrates a portion of the story as many crashes and near misses, especially for people walking and bicycling, go unreported. Some key demographic information such as income, race, and ethnicity are also not captured.



What did we find?

As noted in San José's Vision Zero Action Plan, there are multiple collision hotspots in East and Central San José, revealing a concentration of high-crash streets. These areas likely contain several collision hotspots because residents in these areas are more likely to travel on foot, on bike, or use transit. All key population groups in this analysis are overrepresented in areas adjacent to Vision Zero corridors,¹⁹ high-speed arterials,²⁰ and high crash areas. Also, age, access to safe driving education, high speed roads, and lack of safe and connected bicycle infrastructure are factors in collisions. Except for age, these factors are not included in the collected data.



Source: SPUR

¹⁹ Vision Zero corridors are roadways within San José that account for a high proportion of crashes that result in fatalities and severe injuries. These roadways are the focus of the City's major safety projects and outreach campaigns.
²⁰ A high-speed arterial is a road or street intended to move high volumes of traffic over long distances at high speeds.

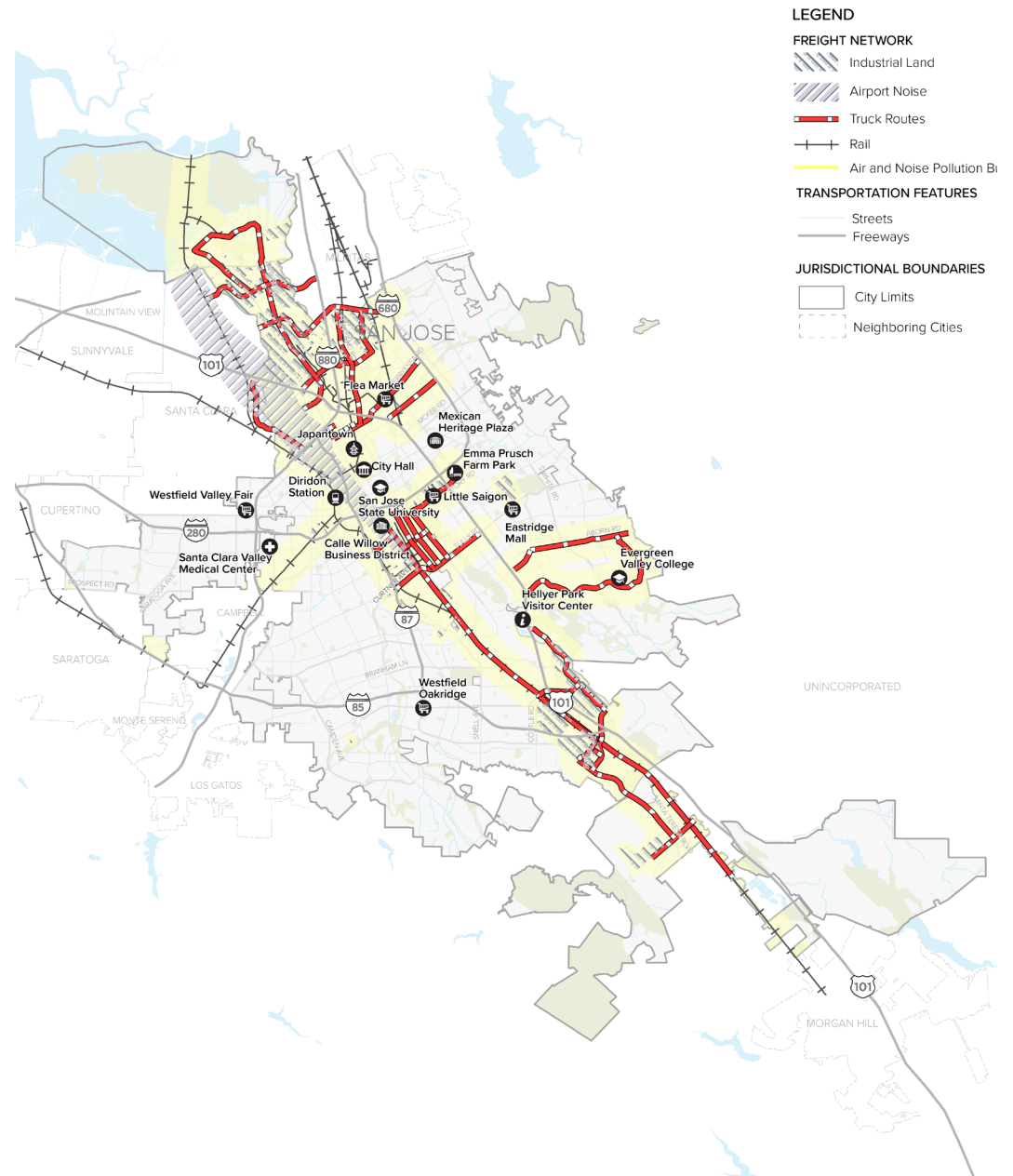
EXPOSURE TO FREIGHT-RELATED POLLUTION

What are freight-related impacts?

Residents who live near freight routes (designated roadways or railways used to transport goods in bulk by truck and train) and industrial land are exposed to higher levels of noise and air pollution.



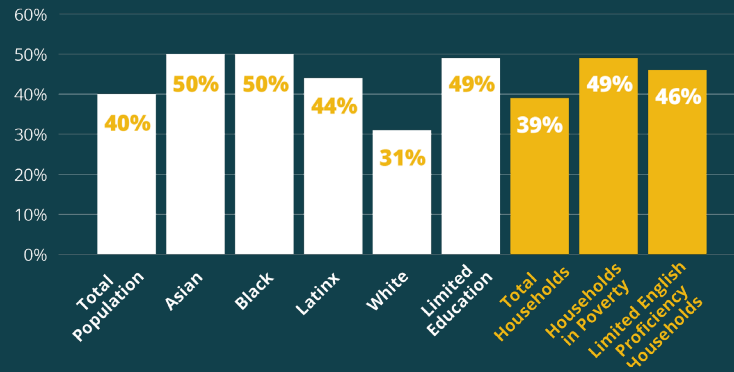
Source: Nelson\Nygaard



What did we find?

Freight routes run north - south along U.S. Route 101 through the middle of San José, with concentrated pockets in the industrial areas south and north of downtown and in East San José. All key population groups are overrepresented in areas close to freight routes and industrial land uses, and thus are disproportionately exposed to freight noise and air pollution. For example, 50% of the city's Asian residents, who make up 32% of the city's total population, live within the freight impact area.²¹ Similarly, 50% of the city's Black residents, who make up around 3% of the total population, live within the freight impact area.

Freight Impacts



²¹ The freight impact area includes a half-mile buffer from designated freight routes.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

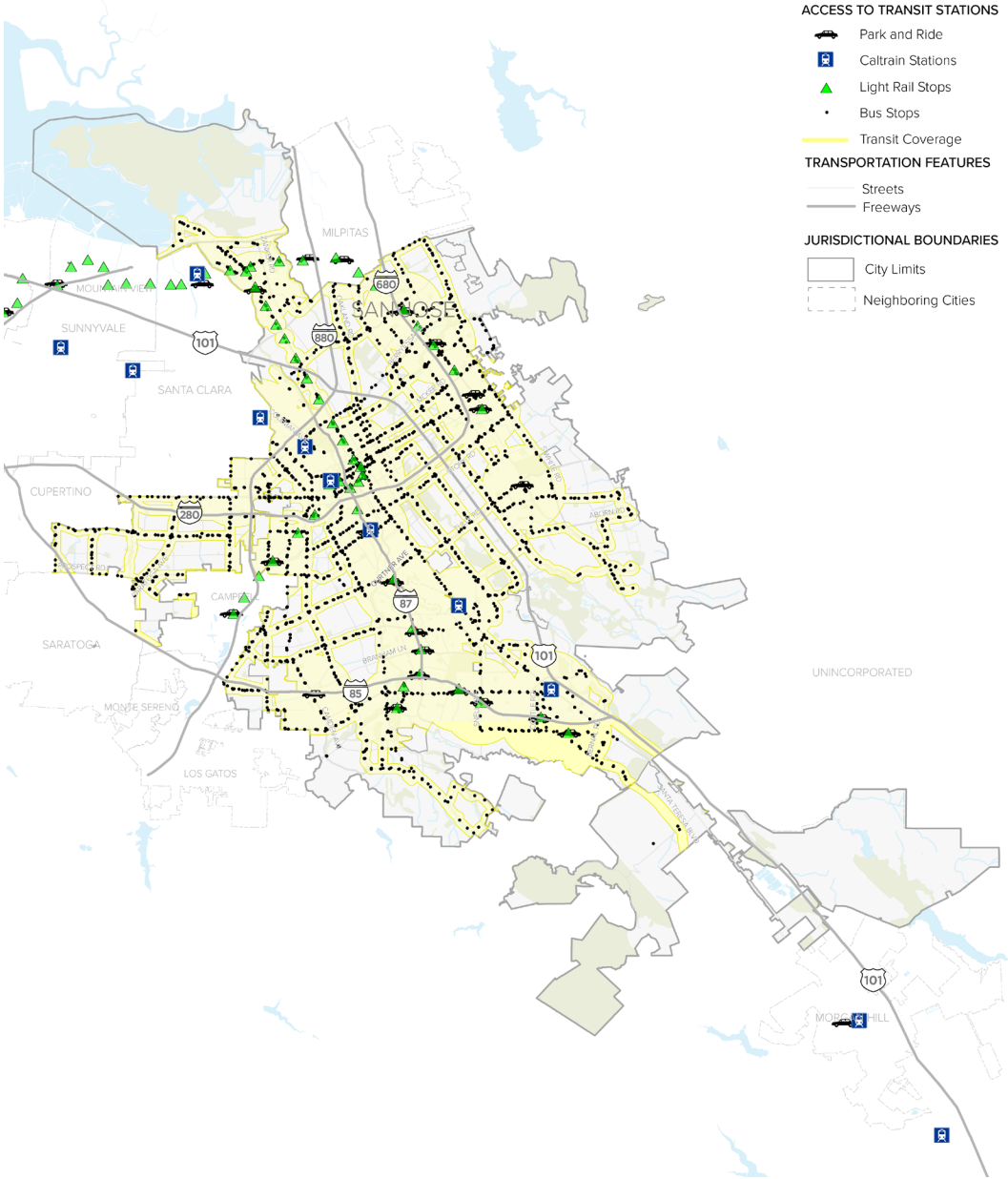
TRANSIT ACCESS

What is transit access?

Transit access is defined as the time required to walk or drive to a bus stop, light-rail station, or park and ride station. Walk access is a 3-minute walk to a bus stop or 5-minute walk to a light-rail station and auto access is a 1-mile drive to a park and ride station. Distance is measured as a straight line, an industry standard used for this type of analysis, rather than how long it might actually take to walk the distance given streetlights, placement of crosswalks, and winding streets.



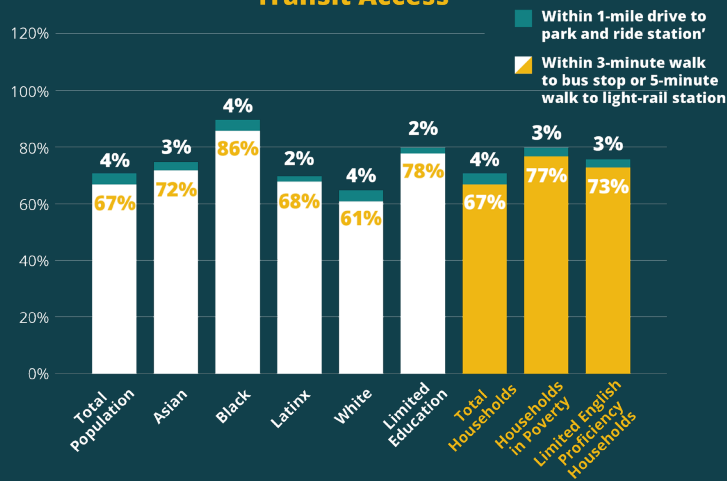
Source: VTA



What did we find?

In general, there is relatively even coverage across the city, and the key populations typically appear to have more access than the general population. Access, or proximity to a bus stop, light-rail station, or park and ride station, however, does not mean that public transit is available when you need it or travels where you need to go. Mapping and analyzing rapid and frequent bus service and light rail service, as shown in the map below, creates a more complete picture of the access provided to key populations, because it illustrates proximity to more reliable, higher-quality transit service.

Transit Access



Source: VTA

TRANSIT SERVICE

What is Transit Service?

The map to the right shows transit service organized by frequency and service type. Rapid bus routes come every 15 minutes or less, frequent routes come every 30 minutes or less but are less frequent than rapid bus routes, and local routes have frequencies of 30 minutes or more. Rail service is primarily concentrated in downtown and in North and South San José where it connects to regional-serving transit. Likewise, rapid and frequent bus routes are concentrated in downtown but extend into West San José and East San José in neighborhoods such as Alum Rock.

In San José, students and many people in the Vietnamese and Latinx communities who are low-income, seniors, and immigrants tend to rely on public transit service. Many students use the VTA SmartPass program, which offers discounted fares for institutions, including colleges in San José; for this reason, transit is an appealing transportation option for students.



What did we find?

The map of transit services shows that bus service is relatively evenly distributed, and the data suggests that key populations have greater access to regular and high frequency bus service than white residents. But Equity Task Force members and residents shared that transit is inadequate: it is far from their homes, isn't available when they need it, and doesn't go where they need to go. VTA's Line 25 operates along Story Road, through the predominantly Latinx and Vietnamese Alum Rock neighborhood. Though it's considered a high-frequency route (the bus comes every 12 minutes), community members said that it tends to be crowded and is one of just a handful of bus lines offered in this high transit-demand neighborhood. Service cuts resulting from a combination of ongoing ridership decline, funding shortfalls, bus driver shortages, and the COVID-19 pandemic have led to major changes that have significantly disrupted people's daily travel needs, particularly older adults and people with disabilities who rely on transit. These changes include less frequent service, elimination of several bus routes, limited operating hours, and truncated bus routes.

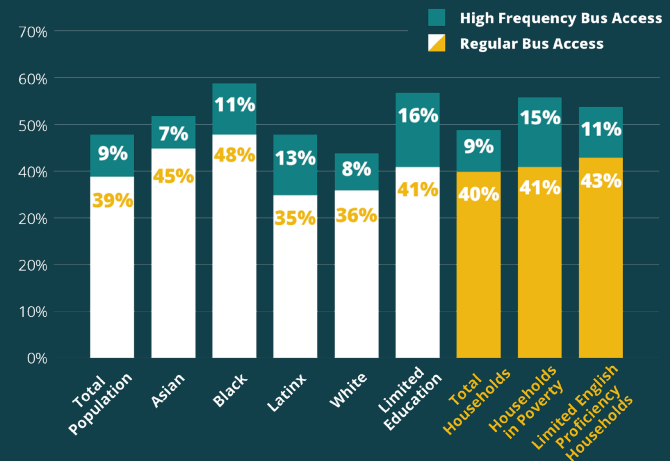
Transit trips to Downtown and West San José from other parts of the city are also challenging. One community member shared that a bus ride from Alum Rock to San José City College takes 90 minutes due to transfers. Getting to a 9 a.m. class on time required them to leave home around 6 a.m. In West San José, people may need to take multiple buses to get to school or work, even if they're traveling short distances. People from neighboring cities who travel regularly to Downtown San José said they spent hours riding

on or waiting for the bus, due to indirect service and limited operating hours. In some cases, trips from East San José to downtown can also be expensive: people without access to a Clipper card can pay up to \$5.00 one-way when traveling from Silver Creek to City Hall. Despite these obstacles, people said they continue to use transit because more direct, on-demand alternatives like Uber or Lyft are too expensive.

Community members also said the absence of adequate shelter and lighting made them feel unsafe, particularly women, seniors, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ people waiting at bus stops. All equity priority residents said they had limited access to light rail service.

Maps and charts do not capture the experience of using transit—the time required to make multiple transfers, how safe people feel waiting for a bus or train, whether they can afford the fare, wayfinding, or how frequently full busses skip their stop—all of which impact people's experience.

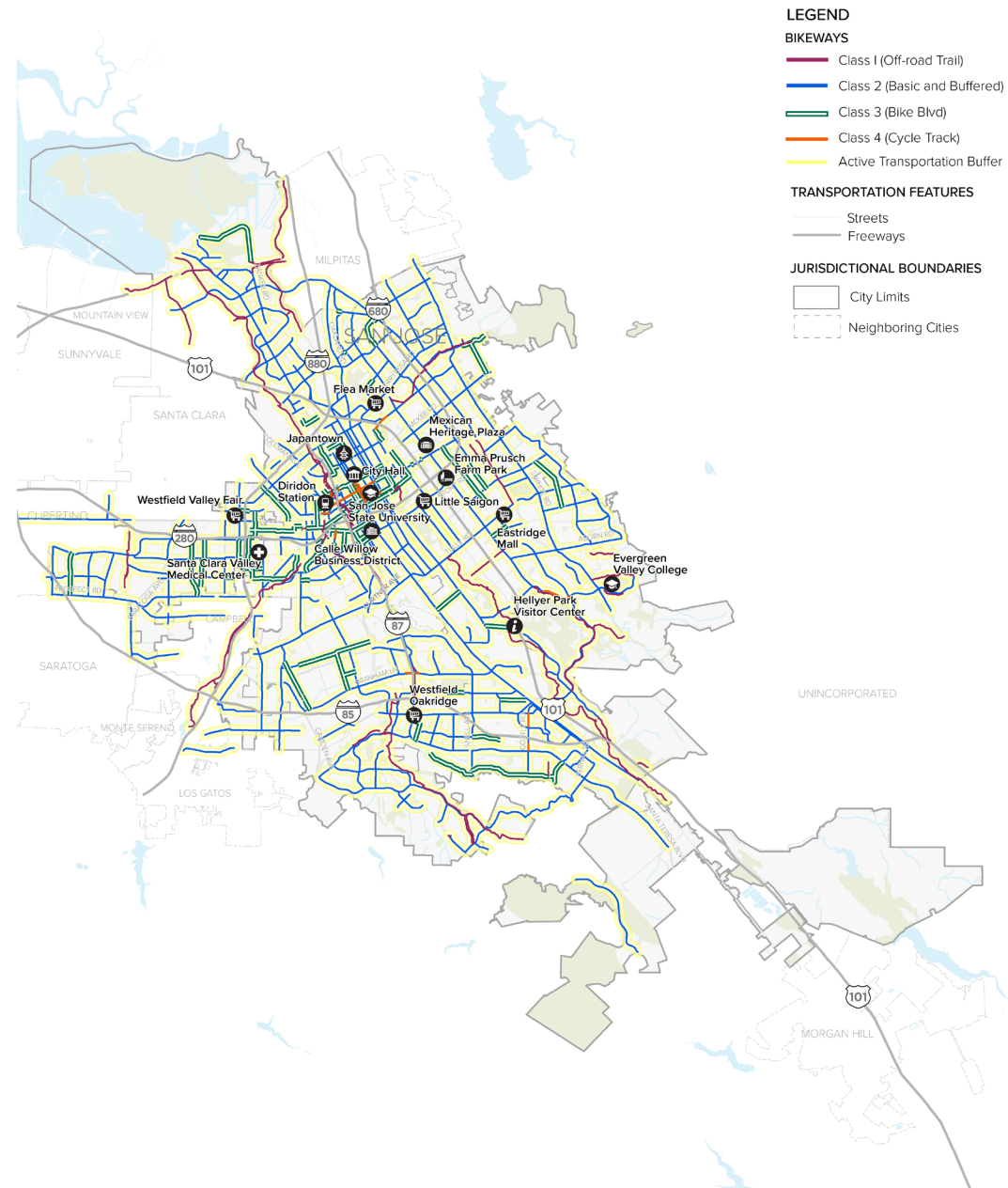
Bus Transit Service



BIKE INFRASTRUCTURE

What is bike infrastructure?

San José has been decisively expanding its bikeway network for the last decade. Bike infrastructure refers to the roadway improvements made specifically to support biking and in some cases walking. Bikeways vary in their level of comfort depending on the separation between bikes and vehicles. Multi-use paths are off-street, fully separated facilities that may be used by pedestrians as well as bikes, such as the Guadalupe River Trail. Bicycle lanes (Class 2), as seen on White Road south of McKee Road, use pavement striping and signage to dedicate a portion of the road for bikes. Bicycle lanes can be found in downtown and the Berryessa and Alum Rock neighborhoods along major arterial streets like McKee Road and Tully Road. Both corridors experience higher rates of fatal bicycle- and pedestrian-involved crashes. Bicycle routes (Class 3), as seen on East St. John Street east of North 10th Street in downtown, use bike icons to designate a preferred route for bicyclists on streets shared with vehicles. When on low-speed neighborhood streets with traffic calming features, these are called bike boulevards. Protected bicycle lanes (Class 4) like Class 2 facilities are also on the road, but use physical



materials such as parked cars, posts, curbs, or planters to separate bicyclists from car traffic. Protected bicycle lanes are primarily found in downtown near City Hall and San José State University. Examples of protected bicycle lanes can be found on San Fernando Street west of 10th Street in downtown.

Class 1 (Off-road Trail) - Guadalupe River Trail



Source: NRT Database

Class 2 (Basic and Buffered) - White Road and McKee Road



Source: Google Maps

Class 3 (Bike Blvd) - East St. John Street



Source: Google Maps

Class 4 (Cycle Track) - West San Fernando Street



Source: Google Maps

What did we find?

Access to multi-use trails and Class 3 facilities is generally evenly distributed across the city, but access to the larger bicycle network is dependent on Class 2 facilities. Although Class 2 facilities are available in Downtown and East San José, many people are likely to be wary of riding on such facilities due to chaotic traffic conditions, high rates of collisions, gaps in the bicycle network, and speeding cars. There are many higher-speed roadways in East San José, many of which are also Vision Zero priority corridors. Other factors such as concerns around theft, personal safety, and lack of clear signage or unfamiliarity with using upgrade bicycle lanes also deter people from using available facilities. Latinx community members expressed interest in riding bikes, particularly for commute trips. However, they generally live and work in areas with comparably fewer bike lanes. Age, physical ability, and education about safe cycling practices also play a role in people’s comfort with bicycling.

We also heard that infrastructure beyond bikes and stations is key to usage of shared systems. For example, we heard that providing lockers for storage of bikes and associated bags may increase access for the unhoused.



Source: NRDC

Bicycle Network Access

