

MAIN STREET AL FRESCO: EVALUATION SNAPSHOT



1. Main Street - center turn lane is present (before Al Fresco)



2. Main Street - center turn lane is removed to prepare for Al Fresco



3. Main Street - parking is repurposed, concrete k-rail is added to serve as the parklet barrier

BACKGROUND

In July 2020, Santa Monica re-envisioned Main Street to allow businesses to temporarily launch outdoor activities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From Pico Boulevard and to Pier Avenue, curb space and private parking lots were transformed to add outdoor dining and retail as part of the City's [economic recovery](#) efforts to safely reopen Santa Monica.

The project sprung from the combined efforts of the Ocean Park Association (OPA) and Main Street Business Improvement Association (MSBIA). These two groups collaborated on a request to have Main Street reconfigured to support local businesses and resident access to their local street. This collaboration, built on communication, consensus-building and problem-solving, catalyzed the project and continued throughout the installation and evaluation period.

Because COVID-19 severely limited inside business activity, moving quickly to create an outdoor alternative was paramount. With the essential factors being cost and expediency, the design and construction used readily available materials and limited street changes to only the most essential. The design repurposed the center turn lane and converted parking spaces in ways that could be implemented by on-call contractors who could mobilize quickly. This expedited implementation and enabled the project to be delivered for approximately \$210,000 which is a fraction of other more permanent construction efforts.



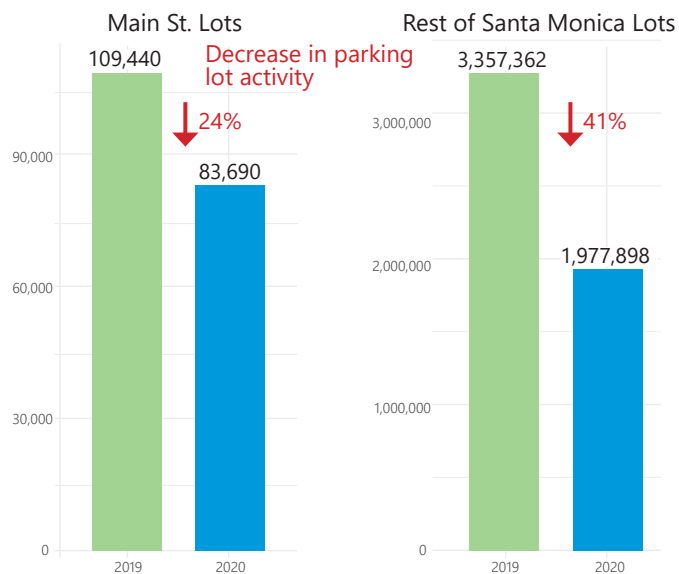
Photo credit: Sean Paul Franjeta

4. Main Street - parking lane is repurposed for outdoor dining

MAIN STREET AL FRESCO: EVALUATION SNAPSHOT

Parking activity on Main Street outperformed other commercial corridors despite the removal of on-street metered spaces.

FIGURE 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF PARKING TRANSACTIONS FOR LOTS/STRUCTURES - MAIN ST. VS THE REST OF SANTA MONICA, JULY THROUGH OCTOBER, 2019 VS 2020



Source: City's parking data

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Surveys of local businesses and feedback from the MSBIA and OPA have been positive. When businesses were asked if they thought the new parklets have helped Main Street, 85% of the businesses responded *Yes-Definitely* and 72% said they would like to keep them. When OPA members were asked how they felt about the currently expanded al fresco outdoor dining on Main St, 82% said they were *overwhelmingly or somewhat in favor*.

EVALUATION

This summary provides information to understand how the [Main Street Al Fresco](#) project has influenced traffic patterns, bicycle and scooter ridership, parking, and vehicle speeds. Four metrics were analyzed to understand changes in mobility and parking operations: parking occupancy, bike and scooter volumes, vehicle speeds and traffic diversion. Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic impacts, the analysis indicated the Al Fresco project resulted in only minor changes to traffic patterns and parking.

TRAFFIC DATA FINDINGS

The parking data collected indicates the reduction of on-street parking did not deter people from visiting the area and that the new outdoor space was critical in helping maintain business activity on Main Street. The impact of the pandemic reduced overall traffic and parking usage in Santa Monica and throughout regional business districts. However, parking activity in the Main Street parking lots had a significantly lower reduction in usage compared to other areas of the City. Citywide parking lot activity experienced a 41% decrease while Main Street had only a 24% decrease overall (Figure 1) indicating the Al Fresco project in the context of the pandemic successfully helped mitigate reduction of business activity.

Some metered spaces are being used for outdoor dining, resulting in fewer meter transactions, however, the number of hours that parking patrons spent visiting Main Street during the pandemic were higher relative to the rest of the City. While total hours spent parking in metered spaces and lots during the pandemic were down citywide by 45% from the prior year, along Main Street they were down only 39%. Parking activity on Main Street decreased less. This corresponds to parking revenues along Main Street that were 21% higher than the corresponding figure for the rest of the City.

MAIN STREET AL FRESCO: EVALUATION SNAPSHOT

Main Street continues to be a popular destination for shared mobility users with over 100 people per day still taking a scooter and getting off somewhere along Main Street to shop, dine and play.

SHARED MOBILITY - SCOOTER AND ELECTRIC BICYCLE VOLUMES

Main Street has always been a relatively more popular destination to reach by scooter or bike than other commercial corridors in the City, and recent mobility data shows that this still holds true. Over 100 people per day are still taking a scooter or ebike and getting off somewhere along Main Street. Shared mobility trips are down less on Main Street than comparable restaurant/retail areas on Montana Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard as shown in Figure 2. And as Figure 3 demonstrates, outdoor dining has not deterred scooter and ebike riders from passing through Main Street.

FIGURE 2: SHARED MOBILITY TRIPS TO MAIN ST AND COMPARISON CORRIDORS, JULY THROUGH OCTOBER, 2019 VS 2020

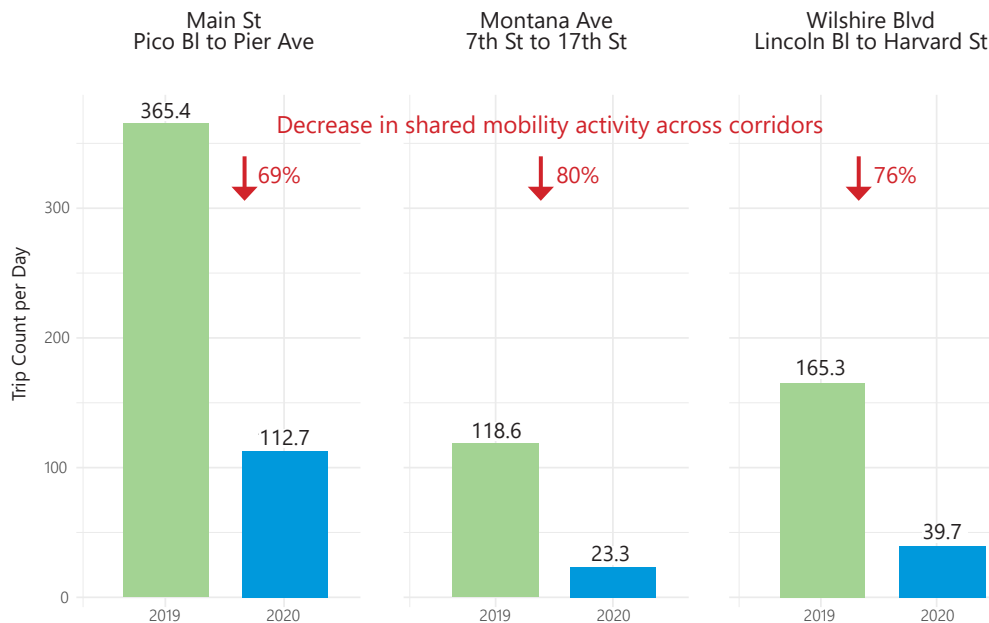
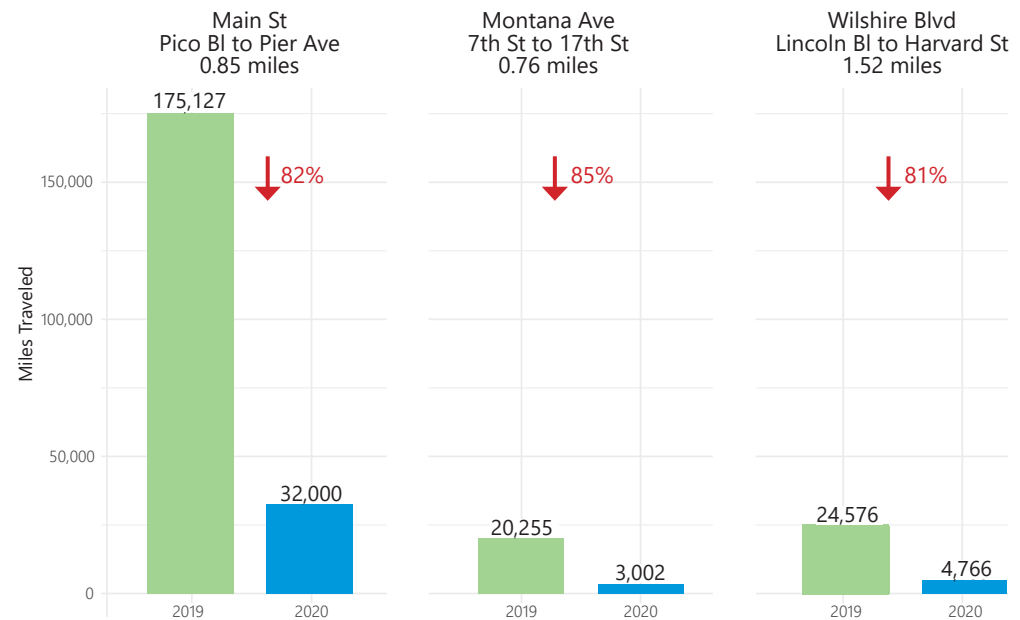


FIGURE 3: SHARED MOBILITY TRIPS ALONG MAIN ST AND COMPARISON CORRIDORS, JULY THROUGH OCTOBER, 2019 VS 2020



Source: City's Mobility Data Specification feed, processed by Remix.

Note: Shared mobility data were relied on for this calculation because they were continuously and accurately available for both 2019 and 2020

MAIN STREET AL FRESCO: EVALUATION SNAPSHOT

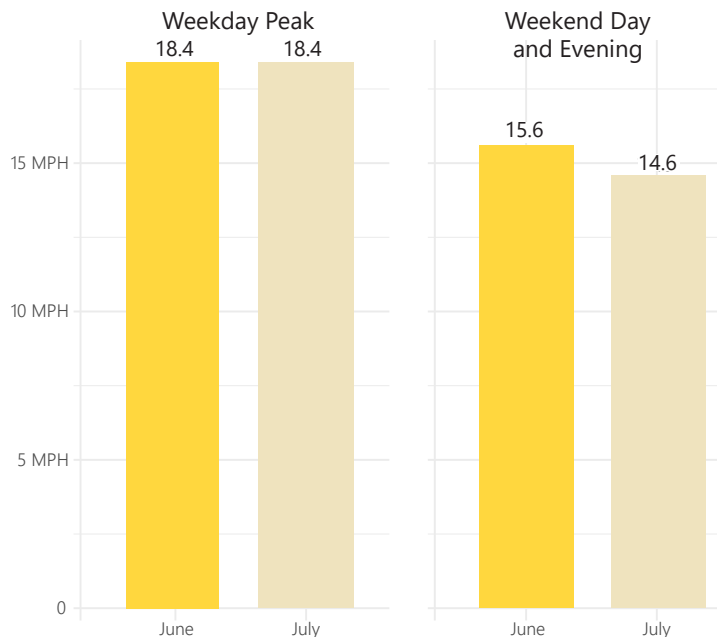
Data shows that drivers are not diverting off of Main Street onto parallel streets like Neilson Way.

VEHICLE SPEEDS AND TRAFFIC DIVERSION

The project's removal of the center turn lane generated concern from some stakeholders who expressed that the new design might create diversion of traffic to parallel streets or cause significant change in travel behavior. Average traffic speeds taken in the month before and after the project show that the changes on Main Street did not change vehicle patterns (Figure 4). Although the data showed a nominal decrease in vehicle speeds during the weekends, changes in congestion have been minimal. When comparing transit data for the same period, June and July, Big Blue Bus riders experienced an improvement to on-time performance for the northbound direction while the southbound direction saw a very slight decline.

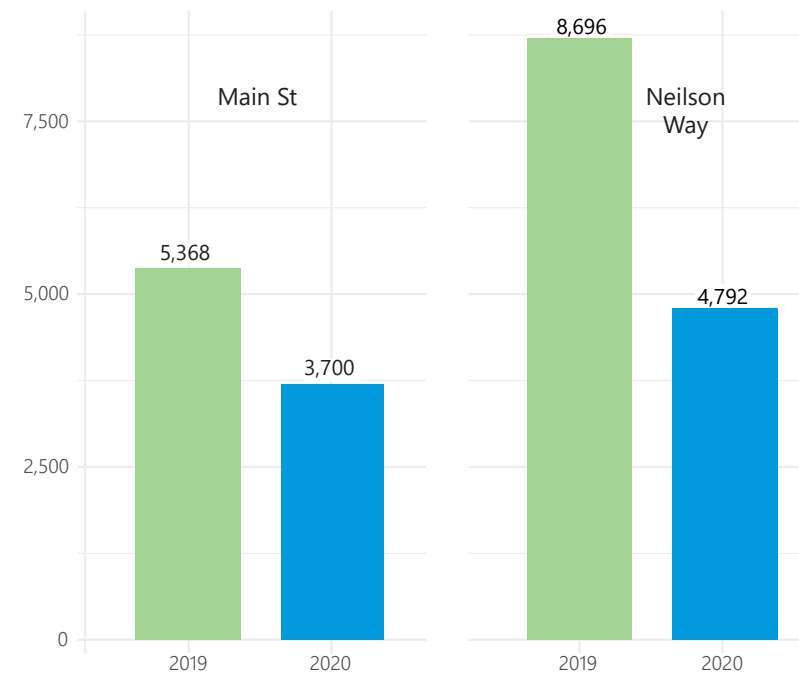
Additionally, Figure 5 shows that drivers are not diverting from Main Street onto Neilson Way. On Neilson Way, data showed that traffic volumes have dropped more than on Main Street. This is a strong indication that the changes are not causing congestion and people are not enticed to divert to parallel routes such as Neilson Way. Historical counts are not available for 3rd Street so a comparable analysis was not possible. Staff have not received any comments describing an increase in traffic on 3rd Street since the project was installed.

FIGURE 4: AVERAGE SPEED ALONG MAIN ST IN MONTH BEFORE AND MONTH AFTER AL FRESCO, JUNE 2020 VS JULY 2020



Source: ClearGuide

FIGURE 5: AVERAGE PEAK HOUR VEHICLE COUNTS ALONG MAIN ST AND NEILSON WAY, 2019 VS 2020



Source: City's data counts. Peak Hours 7am-9am and 4pm-7pm (excludes 4th of July)

MAIN STREET AL FRESCO



Rick's Tavern



Manchego



The Library Alehouse



Lula Cocina Mexicana



Toe Heaven Spa



Artists adorn the barriers with vibrant artwork in the latest installment of Santa Monica's "Art of Recovery" initiative.



Jameson's Pub



Artists brighten up the barriers with farmers market inspired paintings.



Urth Cafe