

POLK STREET PUBLIC LIFE SURVEY

WHAT IS A PUBLIC LIFE SURVEY?

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Public Life Surveys are critical to our understanding of how public spaces function. Through careful and systematic observation, we are able to understand if public spaces serve the needs of people. These needs include dimensions of comfort, safety, and ease of mobility for pedestrians. Surveys include counting of pedestrians and cyclists; and inventory of stationary activities and behaviors.

WHY CONDUCT A PUBLIC LIFE SURVEY?

The simplest answer is that we should count those things that matter most to us, and in cities, people, their behavior as individuals and interactions as groups are the most important thing happening. Indeed, it's the one of the primary reasons to build cities.

The findings of surveys can inform strategies to change the public realm, as well as help us understand the impacts of changes. Have our changes to the city increased or decreased the number of people walking, and, the ‘walkability’ of the city? Gathering data on pedestrians at regular intervals provides important tests for how a city performs for the people who use it, giving everyone a good idea of where to focus future efforts. For cities that have never counted people, the first pedestrian counts are the most important, because these counts get the ball rolling and provide a baseline for future comparisons.

By conducting a survey of stationary pedestrians in public areas, you will learn when, where, and why people are using public spaces. Understanding this basic information can lead to ideas about how the space can function better to support a lively atmosphere, as well as how to improve the quality of the space.

WHEN WAS THE SURVEY DONE?

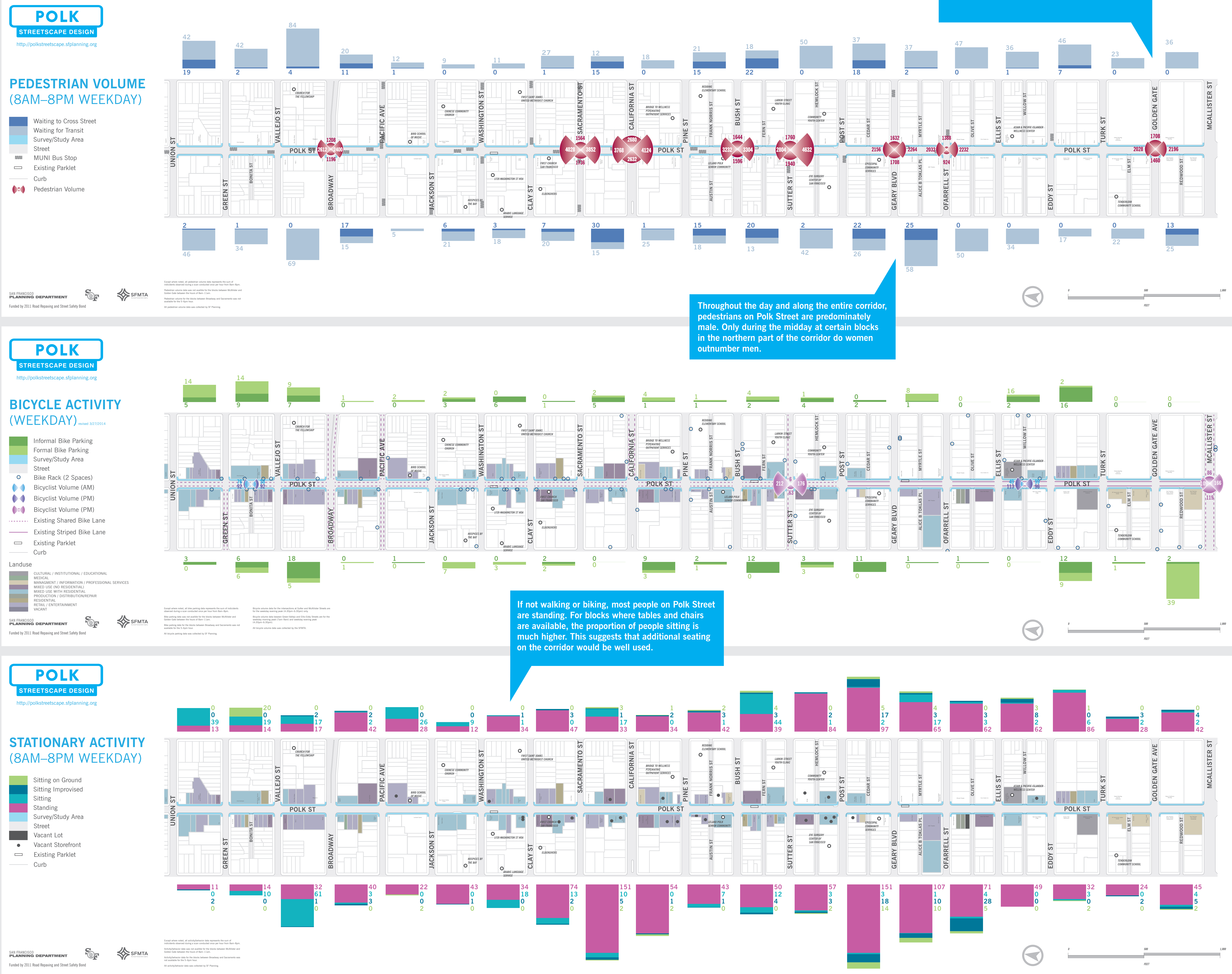
The Public Life Surveys shown here were conducted in October 2013. Typically, Public Life Surveys are conducted during the Fall or Spring when weather conditions are most temperate and students are on a regular school schedule. We'll return to Polk Street with another Public Life Survey in coming years to help measure possible impacts of the streetscape improvements.

EXAMPLE: SURVEY FORM FOR AN ACTIVITY SCAN

POLK STREET ACTIVITY SCAN		WEST SIDEWALK		EAST SIDEWALK	
DATE	TIME	DATE	TIME	DATE	TIME
10/15/13	8:00 AM	10/15/13	8:00 AM	10/15/13	8:00 AM
10/15/13	8:15 AM	10/15/13	8:15 AM	10/15/13	8:15 AM
10/15/13	8:30 AM	10/15/13	8:30 AM	10/15/13	8:30 AM
10/15/13	8:45 AM	10/15/13	8:45 AM	10/15/13	8:45 AM
10/15/13	9:00 AM	10/15/13	9:00 AM	10/15/13	9:00 AM
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10/15/13	7:30 PM	10/15/13	7:30 PM	10/15/13	7:30 PM
10/15/13	7:45 PM	10/15/13	7:45 PM	10/15/13	7:45 PM
10/15/13	8:00 PM	10/15/13	8:00 PM	10/15/13	8:00 PM

POLK STREETScape DESIGN

FROM MCALLISTER STREET TO UNION STREET



PUBLIC LIFE SURVEY: WHAT ARE WE OBSERVING?

Examples (left to right):

- Stationary Pedestrian Counts People—sitting
- Stationary Pedestrian Counts People standing—watching, socializing, meeting
- Stationary Pedestrian Counts—People who are waiting for transport—MUNI or bus;
- Pedestrian counts



SAN FRANCISCO
PLANNING DEPARTMENT



Funded by 2011 Road Repaving and Street Safety Bond