



POLICY BRIEF

Mode Choice and Perceptions of the Built Environment in Watts and Jordan Downs

2019 | Dustin Khuu, MURP '19

ISSUE

Jordan Downs is a 700-unit public housing site that is currently being redeveloped into a mixed-income urban village. Jordan Downs and the surrounding Watts neighborhood were awarded a \$50 million implementation grant from the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) program that allocates California cap-and-trade funds to support projects for Disadvantaged Communities as classified under CalEnviroScreen 3.0. The Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) is interested in leveraging leveraging TCC grant funding to explore transportation improvements in the area.

This study assesses how community members perceive issues of the built environment, and how these perceptions may influence their transportation mode choice. Funding guidelines for the TCC and Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) grants were analyzed to create a set of recommendations that would be most feasible for implementation. From the analysis and recommendation, a toolkit was created that would help LADOT conduct further mobility assessments in other communities.

APPROACH

Data were gathered through a combination of community surveys, interviews, field observations, census data, and collision data. Based on the analysis, the research developed into a Mobility Needs Assessment Toolkit and created a set of recommendations that LADOT should pursue in order to improve user perceptions of the built environment in Watts. Though developed for the Watts community, LADOT can use this toolkit to study mode choice in different communities throughout Los Angeles.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The most cited barrier to community members walking, bicycling, scootering, or taking transit more often was that streets in the community do not feel safe or comfortable. This perception was further validated by collision and census data. Collision data show a high number of vehicular collisions with bicyclists and pedestrians in the area, including a high percentage of victims under the age of 24. Census data also show that the median age in Watts is 21, and residents under 18 in Jordan Downs makeup 45 percent of the population, which is the highest percentage of any age group.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Residents in the Watts community have a lower rate of car ownership than the Los Angeles County average, with most residents taking public transit at least a few times per week.
- Concerns about safety and comfort are the most common reasons that community members did not walk, bike, scooter, or use transit more often.
- Perceived issues of crime and gang activity are still the main safety concerns for residents.
- Residents are concerned about the safety of the community's youth population, which represents both the largest age group of residents and the largest number of collision victims.

MOBILITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

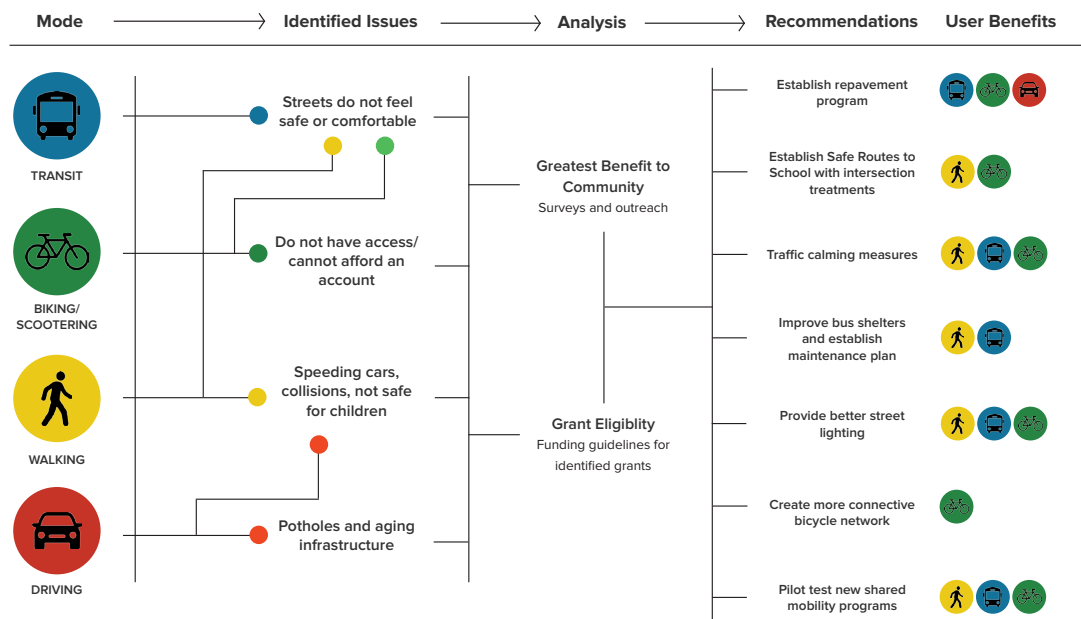
Jordan Downs | Watts
2019

Figure. The Mobility Needs Assessment Toolkit was created from this study to help guide LADOT in assessing mobility needs and improvements in other communities.

Other key findings reported for each mode:

- Transit riders cited the presence of trash at bus stops and street drainage issues as affecting their experience during the rain.
- Bus users cited inadequate bus service on LA Metro's 254 line and the need for DASH service along 97th Street and Alameda Avenue.
- Positive perceptions of bicycling and scooting also signaled a desire to have greater access to these modes, but financial barriers to shared mobility accounts and limited bicycle lanes prevented some respondents from using them more often.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the grant funding guidelines and from learning what the community has voiced as their greatest transportation priorities, the Mobility Needs Assessment

Toolkit proposes the following recommendations the Watts community:

- Identify deteriorating roadway infrastructure, fix potholes and other damaged infrastructure for motor vehicles and bicycles while incorporating green street principles to enhance environmental sustainability.
- Create a comprehensive Safe Routes to School Program for children.
- Implement traffic calming measures into streetscape plans on high priority corridors.
- Improve bus shelters.
- Provide better lighting to improve safety.
- Create a more connected bicycle network.
- Pilot test new shared mobility programs to provide greater access to shared bicycles and scooters.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Khuu, D. (2019). *Mode choice and perceptions of the built environment in Watts and Jordan Downs*. (Master's capstone, UCLA). Retrieved from: https://www.lewis.ucla.edu/2019-capstone_khuu_jordan-downs/

Co-funded by the UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies