

chapter 2

Current Conditions

for Bicycling in Sonoma County

This chapter provides an overview of the existing conditions for bicycling and intermodal access in Sonoma County. The following components are considered: (1) the current and future environment (2) bicycle demand and usage, and (3) bicycle-transit interface

The Physical Setting

The County of Sonoma is located in the Northern California “Wine Country”, approximately 50 miles north of San Francisco. Sonoma County is the largest of all nine Bay Area counties covering 1,576 square miles along the North Coast of the Pacific Ocean. The county is bounded by Mendocino and Lake Counties to the North; Napa and Solano Counties to the East; and Marin County to the South. The main geographical feature in Sonoma County is the Santa Rosa Plain, bordered on the East by the Sonoma and Mayacama Mountains and on the West by the Coastal Range. The Santa Rosa Plain is a flat, smooth valley in the center of the county. Two smaller valleys, the Dry Creek Valley and the Alexander Valley, occupy the northern end of the county. The Sonoma Valley and the Petaluma Valley occupy the southern end of the county. The Russia River, Sonoma County’s major waterway, creates a beautiful meandering path through the heart of the county and westward to the Ocean.

Sonoma County has nine incorporated cities. Seven of those cities, including Santa Rosa, the largest city in the county, are along the Highway 101 corridor. Slightly over 63% of Sonoma County population is concentrated in this corridor. Another 17,000 people reside in the cities of Sebastopol and Sonoma, leaving nearly a third of the population scattered in the unincorporated County from Jenner to Sears Point. There are clusters of communities along the Russian River, along the coast and through the vineyards.

Outside of the 101 corridor (and in many places within the corridor) Sonoma County is rural with low density.

Future Growth

Growth can have tremendous impacts on traffic flow. Along with the increase in the number of people comes an increase in jobs, housing and need for services. The location of those jobs, houses and services will have a direct impact on the amount of traffic. With projected increases in population and high motor vehicle ownership, the use of inexpensive alternative transportation modes remains a desirable solution toward reducing traffic congestion and preserving the quality of life in Sonoma County.

Bicycle Demand and Usage:

Bicycle Ridership

The 2000 Census figures on commute patterns in Sonoma County show that 1.7 percent of Sonoma County residents use bicycles as the principle mode of transportation to work. 3.6 percent of Healdsburg residents use bicycles as their primary mode of transportation. Only 0.5 percent of Cloverdale residents use bicycles as a mode of transportation.

Every spring RIDES for Bay Area Commuters conducts a telephone survey of commuters in the nine Bay Area counties. The survey is designed to track the commuting patterns of residents. Data is collected only at a county level, not by city. The 2002

Mode:	1999	2000	2001	2002
Bike:	1.5%	1.5%	1%	1%
Walk:	1.2%	1.3%	1%	2%

Source: RIDES Commuter Profile Survey

	Population Sampled	Walked	Percent Walked	Bicyclists	Percent Bicyclists
Cloverdale	3,027	71	2.0%	18	0.5%
Cotati	3,426	64	1.8%	38	1.1%
Healdsburg	5,100	224	4.1%	185	3.6%
Petaluma	27,600	714	2.5%	494	1.7%
Rohnert Park	22,119	500	2.2%	368	1.7%
Santa Rosa	70,867	1,593	2.2%	1,243	1.8%
Sebastopol	3,882	125	3.2%	69	1.8%
Sonoma	4,199	301	7.1%	51	1.2%
Windsor	10,966	261	2.4%	139	1.3%
Unincorporated Areas	73,761	3,076	4.1%	1,243	1.7%
Totals	224,947	6,929	3.1%	3,848	1.7%

Source: 2000 Census Data

RIDES Commuter Profile Survey indicates that one percent of those surveyed in Sonoma County use bikes as their primary mode of transportation. These results strongly correspond with the 2000 Census data. The results also correspond with the Bay Area averages. More details about the study are available at RIDES website: www.rides.org

Bicycle Access to Transit

Seven agencies provide bus service in Sonoma County: Sonoma County Transit, Golden Gate Transit, Santa Rosa CityBus, Petaluma Transit, Mendocino Transit Authority, Healdsburg Transit, and Cloverdale Transit. These agencies provide space for bikes on buses. Golden Gate Transit and Mendocino Transit Authority provide regional bus service. Sonoma County Transit provides countywide and local inner-city service. Santa Rosa City Bus and Petaluma Transit provide inner city service

Please contact transit operators for more details. Contact information is available in the appendix.



Bike Racks at Bus Stops and Park and Ride Lots

Approximately fifty bus stops in Sonoma County are equipped with bike racks. The Santa Rosa Transit Mall also features six “clam shell” bike lockers.

Of the 20 park and ride lots located in Sonoma County, 16 are equipped with bike racks. Go to www.sctransit.com for additional information on park and ride and bike rack locations.