



# Safer Streets, Stronger Economies

Lessons in measuring Complete Streets performance

Laura Searfoss, Associate  
National Complete Streets Coalition / Smart Growth America  
Moving Active Transportation to Higher Ground  
April 13, 2015

# Complete Streets



- An overall approach to transportation decision-making
- Consider the needs of all people using a roadway at every phase
- Not a design prescription
- Not a subset of projects—all projects follow Complete Streets approach

# Integrated research approach:

Investments in Complete Streets achieve traditional transportation goals.

Investments in Complete Streets create economic value and support local economic development goals.



# What do communities get for their investments in Complete Streets projects?

To answer this question, *Safer Streets, Stronger Economies*:

- Analyzed 37 built Complete Streets projects on their transportation performance using before-and-after data
- Examined a subset of projects w. economic data (more limited)
  - Compared to citywide trends & “control” corridors (where possible)
- Projected cost-savings from averted collisions using USDOT methods

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# Millwork District, Dubuque IA

Population: 58,155 • Complete Streets policy: 2011 • Cost: \$6.7m

## Design approach

- Narrowed travel lanes
- Replaced sidewalks
- Installed curb extensions
- Added mid-block crossings
- Painted “sharrows”
- Enhanced streetscape

## Outcomes

- 375% increase in all trips
- Walking: 23% ↓
- Bicycling: 273% ↑
- Driving: 1416% ↑
- 75% fewer crashes
- 80% fewer injuries
- \$34 million in private investment

# West Jefferson, NC

Population: 1,315 • Complete Streets policy: 2011 • Cost: \$300,000

## Design approach

- Removed signals
- Installed curb extensions
- Enhanced streetscape with benches and lighting

## Outcomes

- Driving: 1% ↑
- 24% fewer crashes
- 53% fewer injuries
- \$500,000 in private investment
- 10 new businesses
- 55 new jobs
- More visitors

# 3rd & Broad Avenues, Long Beach, CA

Population: 467,892 • Cost: \$900,000



## Outcomes

- Walking: 13% ↑
- Bicycling: 33% ↑
- Driving: 12% ↓
- 50% fewer bicycle crashes
- 23% fewer vehicle crashes
- Lower speeds
- Partner in the business community on Bike Friendly Business district

## Design approach

- Installed cycle tracks
- Narrowed roadway
- Added on-street parking
- Modified 23 signals to add bike and left-hand turn signalization

# The BLVD, Lancaster, CA

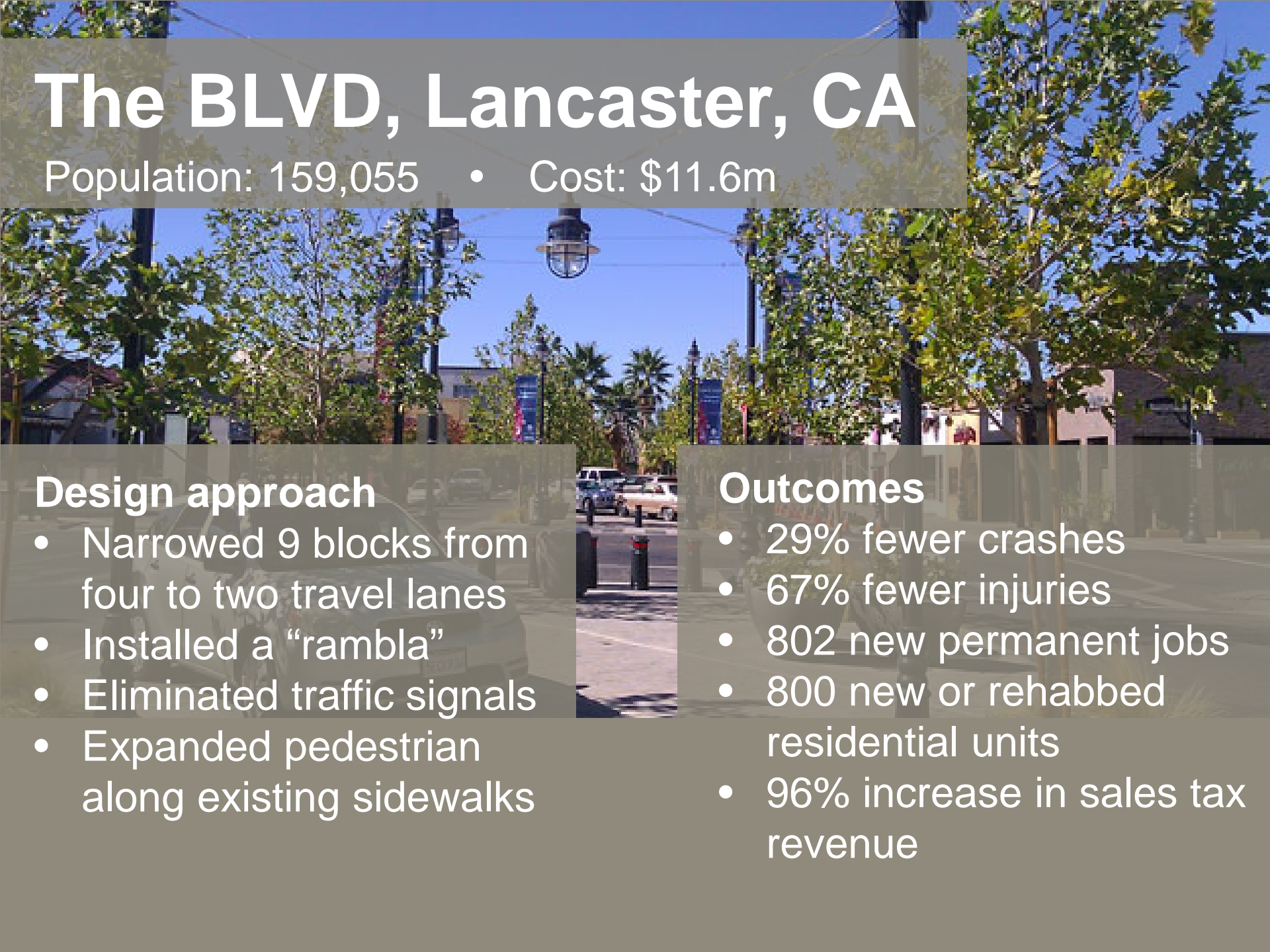
Population: 159,055 • Cost: \$11.6m

## Design approach

- Narrowed 9 blocks from four to two travel lanes
- Installed a “rambla”
- Eliminated traffic signals
- Expanded pedestrian along existing sidewalks

## Outcomes

- 29% fewer crashes
- 67% fewer injuries
- 802 new permanent jobs
- 800 new or rehabbed residential units
- 96% increase in sales tax revenue





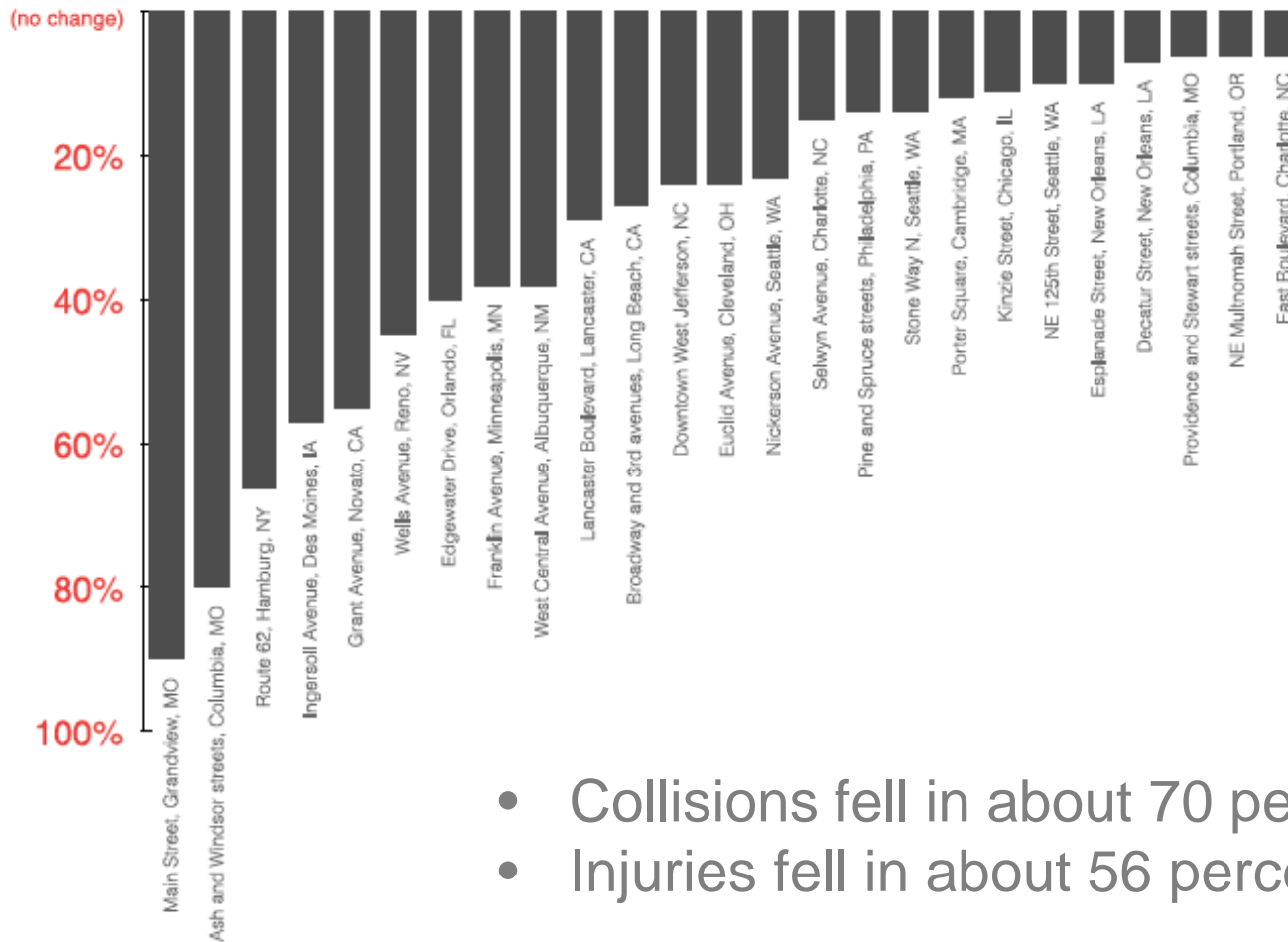
# 1. Safer streets for people using them

FIG. 1



## Collisions went down.

About 70 percent of projects saw a reduction in the number of collisions after their Complete Streets improvements. Of those, many saw declines that were significant.



- Collisions fell in about 70 percent of projects.
- Injuries fell in about 56 percent of projects.

# ...and these safer conditions saved money.

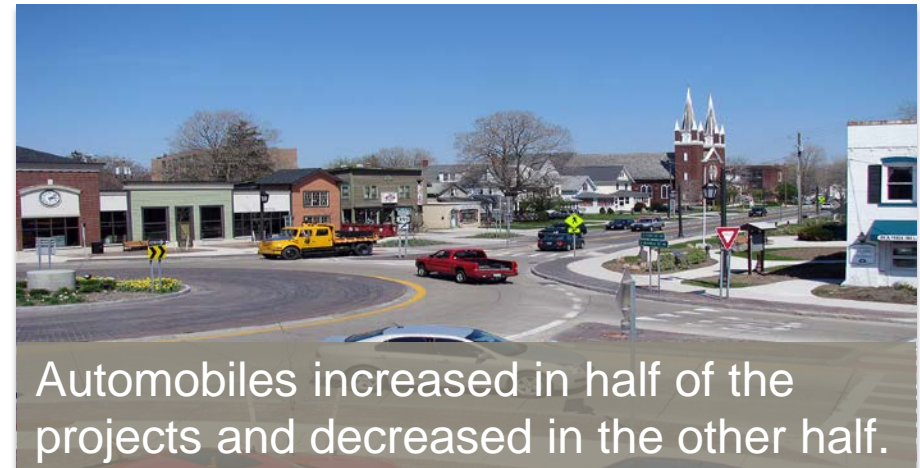
- Every avoided collisions produces cost-savings for individuals.
- For individual projects, these savings alone can justify the cost of these improvements.



Within our sample,  
Complete Streets  
improvements  
collectively  
averted

**\$18.1 million**  
in collision costs in  
**1 year.**

## 2. Streets that encouraged multimodal travel



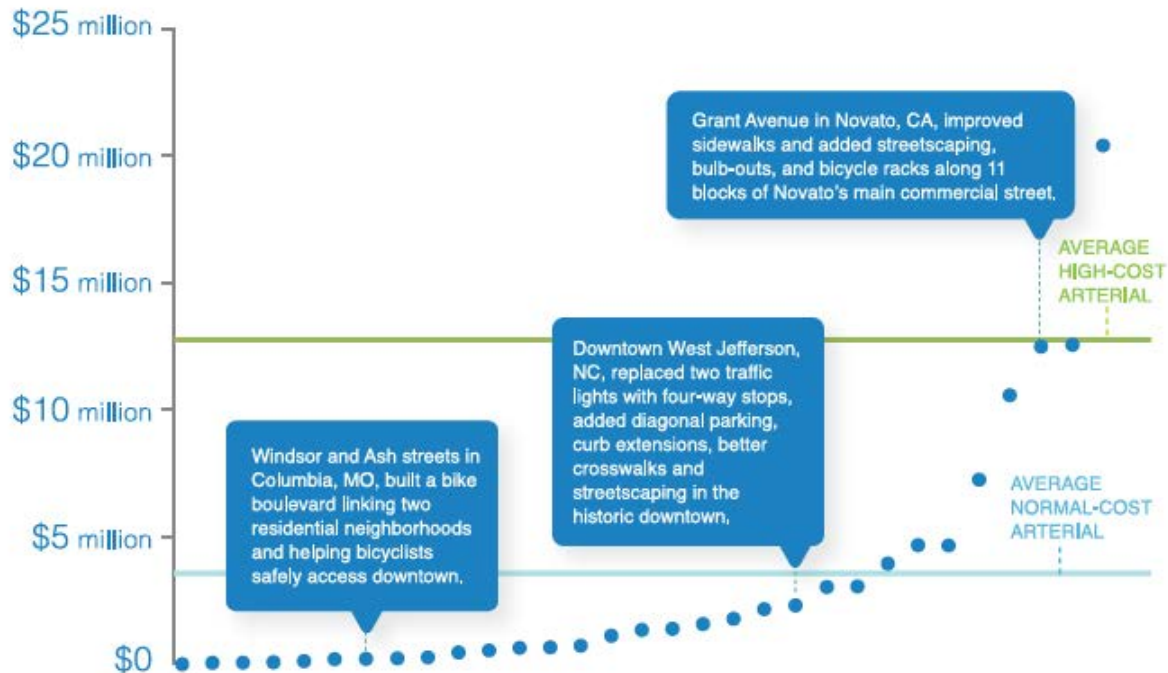
# 3. Streets that were remarkably affordable

- Nearly 75 percent of the projects cost less than the average “normal-cost” arterial.
- Nearly all the projects cost less than the average “high-cost” arterial.



## The cost per mile to build Complete Streets projects vs. an average arterial road

Complete Streets projects are remarkably affordable—some of the projects in our survey cost just a few thousand dollars. They cost less to build than an average urban arterial, yet, as explained earlier, can still increase bicycle, pedestrian, and automobile activity.



## 4. Streets that supported local economic strategies

### Communities reported:

- Higher employment and property values, often outpacing similar unimproved corridors and citywide trends;
- Net new businesses along 6 projects;
- Higher retail sales in 4 projects; and
- Private investment along 8 projects.



# Lessons in performance measurement

## 1. Performance measures can be simple.

- Be sure to distinguish between outputs and outcomes.

## 2. Often institutional and organizational obstacles—not technical ones—pose the greatest barrier.

- Cultivate committed leadership and sustained coordination to overcome them.

## 3. Lack of dramatic results should not be interpreted as failure.

- They should raise questions and shape ideas for how to tweak the project or modify future projects.

## 4. Not all benefits are easily monetized—or should be.

- Ensure projects reflect the values of the public.

Taken together, Complete Streets projects are some of the best transportation investments that a community can make.





# Thank you!

## Contact information

Laura Searfoss

email: [lsearfoss@completestreets.org](mailto:lsearfoss@completestreets.org) / phone: 202.955.5543 ext. 240

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1707 L St. NW Suite 250, Washington, DC 20036 | 202-207-3355