

April 29th, 2026

Yvetteh Ortiz
Public Works Director / City Engineer
City of El Cerrito

Dear Yvetteh,

We are writing with a sense of real urgency. As active members of the El Cerrito community — parents, cyclists, pedestrians, and neighbors — we are genuinely concerned that someone is going to be seriously hurt or killed at the intersection of the Ohlone Greenway and Central Avenue. This crossing is one of the most heavily used points on the path. It sits directly outside the Plaza BART and bus station, serves high school students traveling to and from school, and is the most dangerous bicycle intersection in El Cerrito. Between April 2014 and October 2025, 8 bicyclists were struck by cars at this intersection- more than twice as many as any other intersection in El Cerrito. The conditions there are significantly more dangerous today- sightlines have been dramatically reduced since construction of the new mixed-use building began.

The potential for fatal injury on the Greenway is very real, and we are not just worried about the crossing at Central. Two people riding bicycles on the Ohlone Greenway have suffered catastrophic, life-threatening injuries after being struck by motor vehicles at El Cerrito Greenway crossings. In June 2015, a 25-year-old man was hit by a truck while crossing Lincoln Avenue, one block north of El Cerrito Plaza BART. In September 2023, another bicyclist was struck while crossing Cutting Boulevard next to El Cerrito Del Norte BART. In both cases, the injuries were so severe that the victims had to be airlifted to trauma centers for emergency, life-saving care.

These were not minor incidents, and they were not isolated. TIMS data shows that 11 of the 41 reported bicycle and pedestrian crashes in El Cerrito between February 2023 and October 2025 occurred at Ohlone Greenway street crossings. For a single corridor, that is an alarming share of the city's reported serious conflict points. The pattern is clear: Greenway crossings are a recurring safety problem, and the consequences can be devastating.

This proposal does not ask the city of El Cerrito to invent a new direction. It asks the city to follow through on commitments it has already made in the adopted Ohlone Greenway Master Plan and Active Transportation Plan, which identify Greenway crossing improvements as a city priority.

We understand this is an engineering matter. We accept that, and we are therefore formally petitioning the Engineering Department and the city council. We are writing to you because you have the authority and expertise to act on this directly. We are asking you to champion this cause within your department — to use your engineering judgment, your professional standing, and your position as the city's lead infrastructure decision-maker to make the case that this change is both necessary and overdue.

The case is strong. Active transportation users — cyclists, scooter riders, skaters, and pedestrians — are among the most vulnerable road users. They lack the physical protection of a vehicle, yet current signage places the full burden of yielding on them at every Greenway crossing. Equity demands that we reconsider this arrangement.

Encouraging active transportation is a stated city priority; the infrastructure we build and the rules we enforce must reflect that priority. And critically, there is an important precedent already established by actual behavior: in practice, the majority of drivers already yield to Greenway users at these crossings, even when the signage does not require it. The de facto right-of-way already belongs to active transportation users. Formalizing that reality in signage and law would improve safety, reduce confusion, and send a clear message about what kind of city El Cerrito wants to be.

Attached to this letter is a detailed proposal. It outlines a phased approach: beginning with an immediate safety intervention at the most dangerous Greenway crossings: Central Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, Cutting Boulevard, and Hill Street, and building toward a broader policy that gives vulnerable users equal or superior rights at every Greenway crossing. We have tried to be realistic about the process, the engineering considerations, and the pathway forward. We hope you will find it a useful starting point.

We are not asking for something radical. We are asking that the rules of the road reflect both the city's values and the reality of how these crossings already function. We are asking for your leadership in making that happen.

Thank you again for your time and continued partnership.

Sincerely,

The El Cerrito Walk and Roll Coordinating Committee:

Bill Wood, Janet Price, Steve Price, Henry Pinkard, Stuart Sonatina, Gaia Sonatina, and Carrie Schulman

The BART Bicycle Advisory Task Force:

Jeremiah Maller, Moe Gevirtz, Tyler Morris, and Jon Spangler

PS-

Nearly identical letters have been sent to each member of the city council and to Jarrett Mullen and Yvetteh Ortiz (slightly personalized to each person). None of these people were involved in the crafting of this report.

April 29th, 2026

El Cerrito City Council Members
City of El Cerrito

Dear Council Member,

We are writing with a sense of real urgency. As active members of the El Cerrito community — parents, cyclists, pedestrians, and neighbors — we are genuinely concerned that someone is going to be seriously hurt or killed at the intersection of the Ohlone Greenway and Central Avenue. This crossing is one of the most heavily used points on the path. It sits directly outside the Plaza BART and bus station, serves high school students traveling to and from school, and is the most dangerous bicycle intersection in El Cerrito. Between April 2014 and October 2025, 8 bicyclists were struck by cars at this intersection- more than twice as many as any other intersection in El Cerrito. The conditions there are significantly more dangerous today- sightlines have been dramatically reduced since construction of the new mixed-use building began.

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These were not minor incidents, and they were not isolated. TIMS data shows that 11 of the 41 reported bicycle and pedestrian crashes in El Cerrito between February 2023 and October 2025 occurred at Ohlone Greenway street crossings. For a single corridor, that is an alarming share of the city's reported serious conflict points. The pattern is clear: Greenway crossings are a recurring safety problem, and the consequences can be devastating.

This proposal does not ask the city of El Cerrito to invent a new direction. It asks the the city to follow through on commitments it has already made in the adopted Ohlone Greenway Master Plan and Active Transportation Plan, which identify Greenway crossing improvements as a city priority.

You have the authority to direct city departments on matters of public safety and infrastructure priority. We are therefore formally petitioning you and the city council to take action. We are asking you to bring this matter to a vote — to pass a motion instructing the Engineering Department to review and change the right-of-way designation at these mid-block crossings. We urge you to use your position as an elected representative to make clear to Engineering that this change is both necessary and overdue, and that the Council expects it to be addressed.

The case is strong. Active transportation users — cyclists, scooter riders, skaters, and pedestrians — are among the most vulnerable road users. They lack the physical protection of a vehicle, yet current signage places the full burden of yielding on them at every Greenway crossing. Equity demands that we reconsider this arrangement.

Encouraging active transportation is a stated city priority; the infrastructure we build and the rules we enforce must reflect that priority. And critically, there is an important precedent already established by actual behavior: in practice, the majority of drivers already yield to Greenway users at these crossings, even when the signage does not require it. The de facto right-of-way already belongs to active transportation users. Formalizing that reality in signage and law would improve safety, reduce confusion, and send a clear message about what kind of city El Cerrito wants to be.

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Ohlone Greenway Active Transportation Right-of-Way: A Plan for Change

Prepared for:

El Cerrito City Council Members

Yvetteh Ortiz, Public Works Director / City Engineer

Jarret Mullen, Active Transportation Manager

Prepared by:

Members of the El Cerrito Walk and Roll Coordinating Committee, including: Bill Wood, Janet Price, Steve Price, Henry Pinkard, Stewart Sonatina, Gaia Sonatina, and Carrie Schulman
and

Members of the BART Bicycle Advisory Task Force, including: Jeremiah Maller, Moe Gevirtz, Tyler Morris, and Jon Spangler

Overview

The Ohlone Greenway is one of El Cerrito's most important active transportation corridors. Running beneath the BART tracks, it connects neighborhoods, schools, transit, and commercial areas for thousands of cyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized users every day. Along its length, the Greenway crosses numerous local streets at mid-block locations — intersections that are, by their nature, unexpected by drivers who have not been trained to watch for cross-traffic between marked intersections.

At every one of these crossings, current signage gives the right-of-way to vehicular traffic and requires Greenway users to stop. This arrangement is inconsistent with El Cerrito's active transportation goals, inconsistent with the actual behavior of drivers and cyclists at these crossings, and — we believe — a source of genuine danger.

This document proposes a phased plan to change that. We call for:

- Immediate safety intervention including installation of a stop sign for motorized traffic at the Ohlone Greenway's crossing with Central Avenue.
- A medium-term review of other high-use Greenway crossings near BART stations (Lincoln Avenue, Hill Street, and Cutting Boulevard).
- A long-term policy that gives active transportation users equal or superior rights at every Greenway crossing.

The Case for Change

Encouraging active transportation is a stated City priority; the infrastructure we build and the rules we enforce must reflect that priority.

Vulnerability and Equity

Cyclists, scooter riders, skaters, and pedestrians are physically unprotected in a way that drivers are not. A collision that dents a car door can hospitalize or kill a cyclist. Placing the legal burden of stopping entirely on the more vulnerable party is a design choice — and one that can and should be revisited. Many cities and states have already moved toward giving vulnerable road users greater legal protection at mid-block crossings; El Cerrito should be among them.

Active Transportation as City Policy

El Cerrito has committed publicly to encouraging active transportation as a means of reducing car trips, improving public health, reducing emissions, and building a more livable community. Infrastructure and signage that treats cyclists as second-class users works directly against those goals. *If we want people to choose cycling and walking, we must make those choices feel safe and respected.*

Consistency with Adopted City Plans

Our proposal asks the City to implement, not reinvent, its own adopted policy commitments for the Ohlone Greenway. The City has already committed itself to this direction in two adopted plans: the Ohlone Greenway Master Plan, adopted by the El Cerrito City Council on June 15, 2009, and the City of El Cerrito Active Transportation Plan, adopted in April 2016. The Active Transportation Plan designates Ohlone Greenway Crossing Improvements as “Detailed Project 2”, one of the City’s nine detailed projects, includes it in the Plan’s prioritized project list, and reflects public input ranking Ohlone Greenway path crossings among the City’s top priorities.

The Active Transportation Plan calls for Ohlone Greenway crossing improvements such as flashing beacons, curb extensions, triple-four trail crossings, median refuges, and additional analysis of traffic control measures at Greenway crossings. The Plan directly supports changing traffic control at some Greenway crossings. It states: “Many cross-streets along the Greenway are low-volume roadways that carry less than 4,500 vehicles a day. The crossing of low-volume cross-streets presents an opportunity to replace the STOP control on the Greenway with YIELD control. [The City] could consider requiring cross-street traffic to YIELD or STOP for path users on low-volume side-streets in the future.” In short, the safety improvements proposed here are not new in principle; they are a logical implementation of the City’s own adopted plans.

The Law Already Reflects Reality

Perhaps the most compelling argument for this change is the simplest one: it is already happening. Observation of Greenway crossings throughout the day reveals that most drivers do yield to cyclists and pedestrians, even though the current signage does not require them to. Most Greenway users, in turn, do not come to a complete stop at every crossing — because doing so would be impractical and because drivers largely yield anyway.

This gap between the law and actual behavior is itself a safety problem. When road users — both drivers and cyclists — cannot predict what others will do at an intersection, the potential for a dangerous miscommunication rises sharply. Aligning the legal right-of-way with established behavioral norms reduces that uncertainty. It does not change what most people do; it makes what most people do legally clear.

Phase 1: Immediate Action at Central Avenue

Why Central Avenue First

The crossing of the Ohlone Greenway at Central Avenue is the highest-priority location for intervention for several compounding reasons:

- History of collisions: This crossing had more than double the amount of bicycle collisions with motorized vehicles than any other intersection in El Cerrito, and had 23% (8 of 35) of all bicycle accidents on the Ohlone Greenway between 2014 and 2025 (Appendix 1).
- Construction-reduced visibility: The recent construction of a new multi-story building at this intersection has materially reduced sightlines for both drivers and Greenway users. What was already the most dangerous crossing has become one where neither party can see the other until they are nearly upon them.
- Volume: The crossing sits immediately outside the Plaza BART station and a major bus stop. Thousands of transit riders per day transfer between BART/bus and the Greenway at this exact point, making it one of the most heavily used active transportation crossings in the city.
- School traffic: High school students use this crossing in concentrated waves before and after school, increasing the density and vulnerability of users at predictable peak times.
- High vehicle speeds: Central Avenue carries faster-moving traffic than many of the smaller residential streets along the Greenway, increasing the severity of any potential collision.

We want to be direct: we believe this crossing, in its current state, is a serious accident waiting to happen. We are asking for immediate action, not a multi-year planning process.

Recommended Immediate Interventions at Central Avenue

We recognize that a permanent right-of-way change may ordinarily require an engineering review. However, given the documented crash history at the Central Avenue/Ohlone Greenway crossing, the high volume of vulnerable road users, and the further reduction in visibility caused by ongoing construction, this location presents an urgent safety condition that warrants immediate interim action. We urge the City to install temporary STOP control for motorized traffic at this crossing without delay, while expediting or waiving any discretionary engineering steps that would otherwise postpone a proven safety intervention.

1. Immediately install temporary STOP signs for motorized traffic on Central Avenue at the Ohlone Greenway crossing.
2. Treat the current construction-related visibility reduction as an emergency safety condition requiring interim traffic control.
3. Expedite or waive nonessential procedural steps for temporary STOP control while completing any review required for a permanent right-of-way change.
4. Evaluate a permanent crossing design that gives Ohlone Greenway users equal or greater priority, consistent with the Master Plan's recommendation that the City consider requiring low-volume cross-street traffic to YIELD or STOP for path users.

Immediate Action at Lincoln Avenue

Why Lincoln Avenue Matters

The crossing of the Ohlone Greenway at Lincoln Avenue warrants safety improvements for several reasons:

- Severe injury crash history: In June 2015, a 25-year-old man riding on the Greenway was struck by a pickup truck while crossing Lincoln Avenue. He suffered serious injuries and was airlifted to a trauma center.
- Proximity to Plaza BART: Lincoln is one block north of El Cerrito Plaza BART station, making it part of a key bicycle and pedestrian approach to transit.
- Driver expectation: Like other mid-block Greenway crossings, Lincoln can catch drivers off guard, increasing the risk of conflict with people biking and walking.

Recommended Immediate Interventions at Lincoln Avenue

We recognize that a formal right-of-way change requires an engineering process. In the interim, we urge the City to implement the following steps as quickly as possible:

1. Install centerline hardening with posts and evaluate for a pedestrian crossing pop-up at Lincoln Avenue as a quick, low-cost safety improvement recommended by Bike East Bay.
2. Add high-visibility crossing markings and warning treatments to make the crossing more visible to approaching drivers.
3. Evaluate a raised crosswalk as a longer-term improvement to slow traffic and reinforce the crossing.
4. Include Lincoln in the first round of formal engineering review for stronger permanent protections.

Immediate Action at Cutting Boulevard & Hill Street

Why Cutting Boulevard & Hill Street Must Be Prioritized

The crossing of the Ohlone Greenway at Cutting Boulevard is one of the clearest candidates for urgent intervention for several reasons:

- Recent severe injury crash: In September 2023, a bicyclist was struck by a motor vehicle at the Greenway crossing at Cutting Boulevard and suffered major injuries. The victim was airlifted to John Muir Hospital trauma center for treatment.
- Immediate adjacency to Del Norte BART: This crossing sits directly beside El Cerrito Del Norte BART station, making it a key access point for people biking and walking to and from regional transit.
- Higher-speed roadway: Cutting Boulevard carries faster and heavier traffic than many of the smaller streets crossed by the Greenway, increasing both crash risk and injury severity.
- This crash history, combined with the crossing's proximity to Del Norte BART, makes Cutting Boulevard & Hill Street among the strongest candidates for immediate safety improvements on the Greenway.
- Community-identified safety concern: In the 2022 Complete Streets Vision Survey for El Cerrito Del Norte TOD, Cutting Boulevard was identified by 198 respondents as the area most in need of special treatment to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Recommended Immediate Interventions at Cutting Boulevard & Hill Street

We recognize that a formal right-of-way change requires an engineering process. In the interim, we urge the City to implement the following steps as quickly as possible:

1. Install centerline hardening with posts and evaluate for pedestrian crossing pop-ups on Cutting Boulevard and Hill Street, on either side of El Cerrito Del Norte BART, as a quick, low-cost safety improvement recommended by Bike East Bay.
2. Add high-visibility crossing markings and warning treatments to make the crossing more visible to approaching drivers.
3. Evaluate raised crosswalks as a longer-term improvement to slow traffic and improve safety.
4. Prioritize Cutting Boulevard & Hill Street in the formal engineering review for stronger permanent protections.

Phase 2: Engineering Review of All Greenway Crossings

Once the immediate Central Avenue situation is addressed, we propose a systematic review of every Greenway crossing. This review should assess each crossing for:

- Volume of Greenway users (pedestrians, cyclists, other) during peak and off-peak hours
- Volume and speed of vehicle traffic on the crossing street
- Sightline distances and obstructions
- Proximity to schools, transit, and other pedestrian generators
- Incident history (near-misses and collisions)
- Existing signage and marking conditions

Based on this review, each crossing should be assigned one of three designations:

Designation	Description	Applicable When...
Active Transportation Priority	Greenway users have the right-of-way; vehicles must stop or yield.	High Greenway volume, lower vehicle speeds or volumes, proximity to schools or transit.
Shared / Equal Rights	All users yield to those already in the crossing; no party has blanket priority.	Balanced volumes on both Greenway and cross street; adequate sightlines.
Signalized or Controlled	Traffic signal, RRFB, or other device manages priority.	High vehicle speeds or volumes where passive signage alone is insufficient.

We propose that no crossing should be redesignated to maintain current vehicle priority without explicit justification. The default outcome of this review should be at minimum equal rights for Greenway users.

Phase 3: Long-Term Policy and Community Expectation

The ultimate goal of this effort is a standing policy: the Ohlone Greenway is a primary active transportation route, and its users will be treated as having equal or superior rights to vehicular traffic at every mid-block crossing. This should be codified in El Cerrito’s Active Transportation Plan and reflected in the City’s engineering standards for any future path crossings.

Changing the signs is only part of the work. The City should also:

- Communicate the change clearly to residents and drivers, using social media, neighborhood outreach, and signage transitions that make the new rules legible.
- Monitor crossings after implementation to assess safety outcomes and adjust as needed.
- Work with the Contra Costa County Transportation Authority (CCTA) and regional partners to align this approach with broader Greenway improvement efforts.

Precedent and Legal Pathway

Giving active transportation users priority at mid-block crossings is not novel. Many cities and counties have implemented similar changes through engineering orders, traffic control device modifications under the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD), and municipal traffic ordinances. Of note is the City of Berkeley’s Ohlone Greenway Safety Improvements Project (<https://berkeleyca.gov/your-government/our-work/capital-projects/ohlone-greenway-safety-improvements-project>).

We are asking the Engineering Department to initiate a traffic engineering study at Central Avenue as the first step.

Our Ask

We are asking:

1. Formally support this petition to the Engineering Department and advocate for Central Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, and Cutting Boulevard / Hill Street crossings to be prioritized for immediate safety review.
2. Work with Engineering to develop a scope and timeline for the Phase 2 review of all Greenway crossings.
3. Identify and implement interim safety measures at Central Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, and Cutting Boulevard / Hill Street that do not require a formal right-of-way change but improve conditions immediately.
4. Engage community members, neighborhood organizations, and school representatives as part of the planning process.
5. Apply for funding from BART's [Safe Routes to Transit & Bay Trail \(SR2TBT\)](#) when the grant period opens this summer to make these plans possible.
6. Ensure that all future City plans affecting Ohlone Greenway crossings provide active transportation users with equal or greater right-of-way priority than motorized traffic.

Conclusion

The case for action is already strong on safety grounds alone. Two bicyclists have suffered catastrophic, life-threatening injuries at El Cerrito Greenway crossings, and TIMS data shows that 7 of the 40 reported bicycle and pedestrian crashes in El Cerrito between September 2023 and October 2025 occurred at Ohlone Greenway street crossings. That concentration of harm justifies urgent intervention.

But the goal should be broader than preventing the next severe crash. El Cerrito's Active Transportation Plan calls for a system that serves users of all ages and abilities and provides a richly connected network of low-stress bicycle facilities, while prioritizing safety improvements near BART stations, bus stops, and schools. The Greenway should meet that standard.

That broader goal is supported by the research. Recent longitudinal research across 28 U.S. cities found that lower-stress bicycle facilities were associated with larger bicycle ridership gains. A systematic review also found that women consistently show stronger preferences for low-stress bicycle facilities with greater protection from motor traffic. Research on greenways, trails, and similar facilities also found benefits including increased physical activity and economic benefits that exceed costs. In short, making the Ohlone Greenway safer and lower-stress would not only reduce the risk of serious injury; it would make the corridor more inviting, more inclusive, and more useful for everyday travel.

The Ohlone Greenway is an asset that El Cerrito should be proud of and protective of. Right now, the rules governing its mid-block crossings do not reflect the city El Cerrito

aspires to be, do not protect the people most at risk, and do not reflect the reality of how drivers and cyclists already behave. We can do better, and we believe you agree.

We are committed to being constructive partners in this process. We are available to meet, to provide additional data or documentation, and to help communicate any proposed changes to the broader community. We look forward to working with you.

Appendix 1.

Data Sources

Pedestrian and bicycle collisions with motorized vehicles were collected from the Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS) available online from UC Berkeley: <https://tims.berkeley.edu>. TIMS pulls its data from the Statewide *Integrated Traffic Records System* (SWITRS). We pulled all available bicycle and pedestrian collision data, from 2014-2025.

One additional record was added to our database by hand, the serious bicycle crash involving a vehicle on Lincoln Avenue and the Ohlone Greenway on 6/28/2015. This incident was remembered by Jeremiah Maller and verified with the existence of local news coverage (<https://www.mercurynews.com/2015/06/29/updated-el-cerrito-air-evacuation-of-injured-bicyclist-by-calstar-helicopter-from-cerrito-vista-park/>). It is worth noting that EMS dispatch calls for bike/ped collisions significantly outnumber what appears in official police-reported statistics. The D.C. Policy Center found 30% of pedestrian/cyclist crashes lacked police reports in a 2021 study (<https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/crash-report-disparities/>).

Geolocating Incidents to the Ohlone Greenway

We found many incidents did not properly geolocate to the Ohlone Greenway in the database- the most common issue was a description of “Bart Path” as the cross street, which kept the incident from displaying on the TIMS map. We used a combination of address normalization and extraction using Claude Haiku followed by location retrieval with Google maps API to properly geolocate many incidents. Details are available at <https://github.com/billewood/switrs-geocoder>.

Online Data Visualization

We have made our curated dataset of bicycle and pedestrian collisions easily viewable in a graphical format at collisions.billewood.com. The underlying source code is available at <https://github.com/billewood/collision-map>.

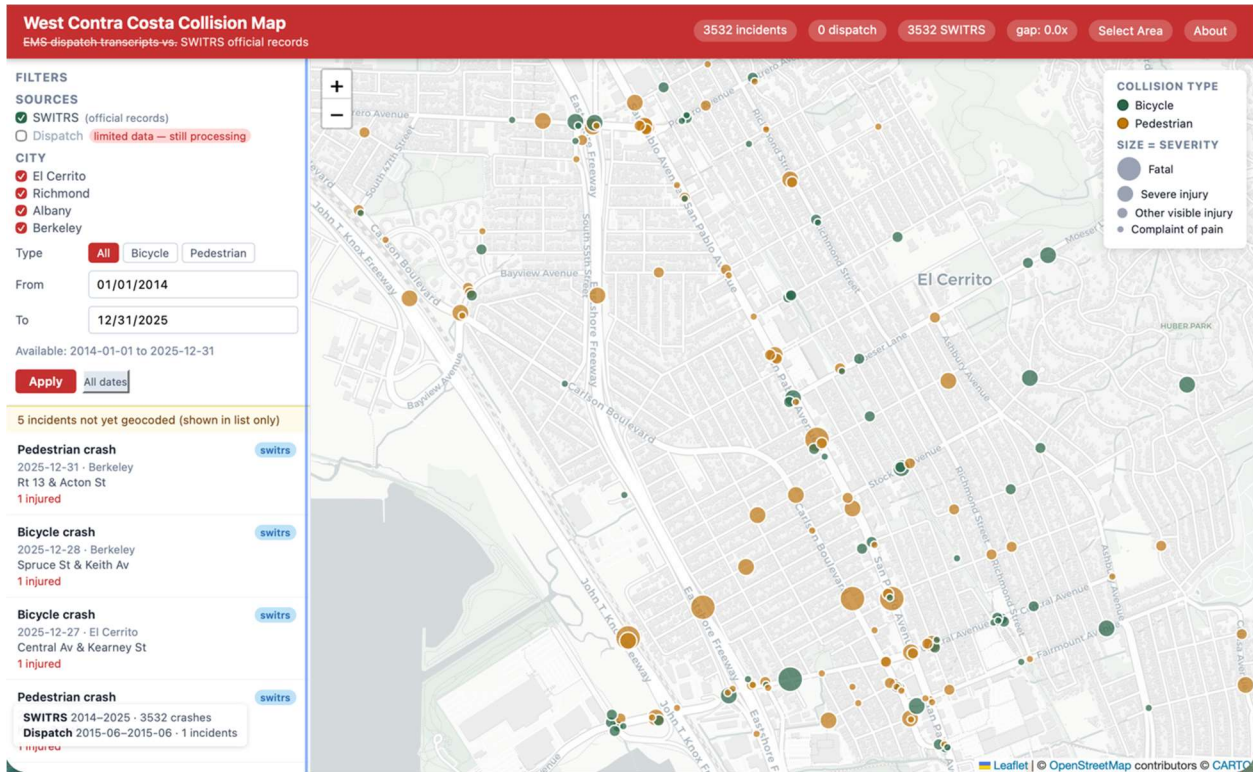


Figure 1. Screenshot of <https://github.com/billewood/collision-map>.

Results

We found a substantial number of collisions occurring on the crossings of the Ohlone Greenway. Crashes were most numerous near the two BART stations, and Central Avenue had a disproportionately large number of bicycle crashes, more than double any other intersection (Figure 1). There was no clear trend upward or downwards in the number or severity of crashes, but the final year on record did have the most crashes in the study period (Figure 2).

Ohlone Greenway Collisions by Intersection
 El Cerrito, Apr 2014–Oct 2025 (n=35)

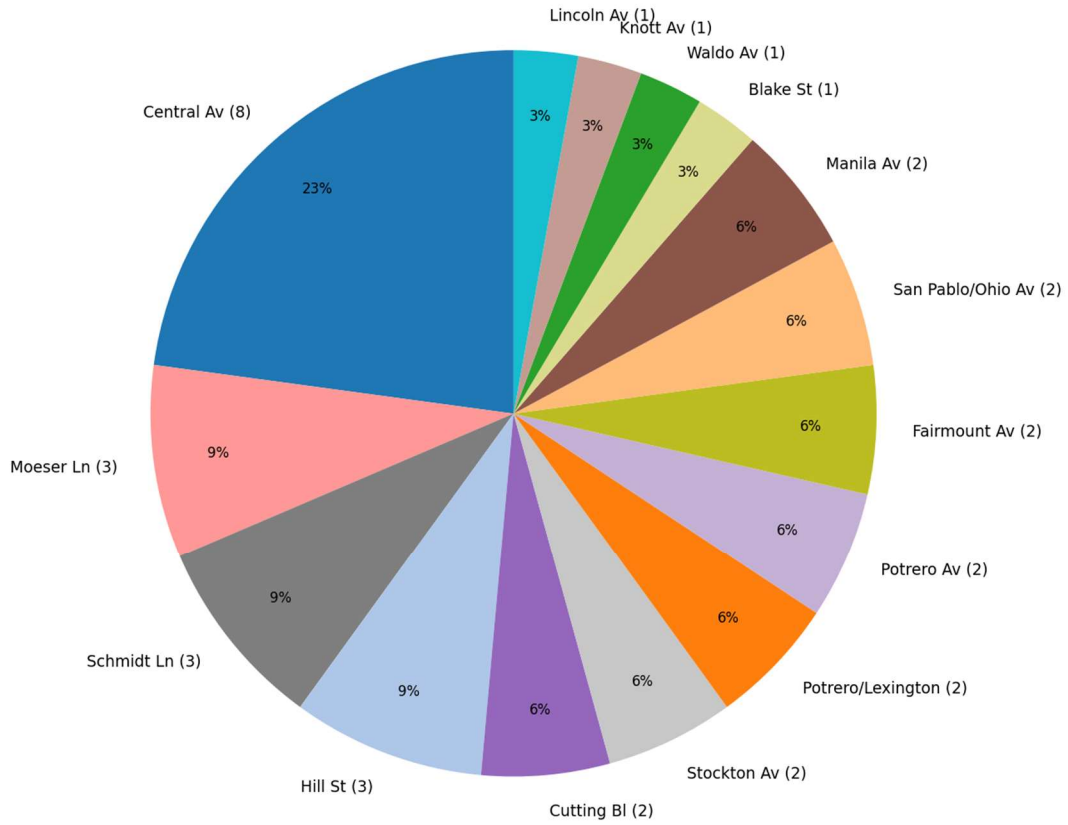


Figure 1. Relative number of bicycle crashes at intersecting roads on the Ohlone Greenway in El Cerrito between 2014 and 2025.

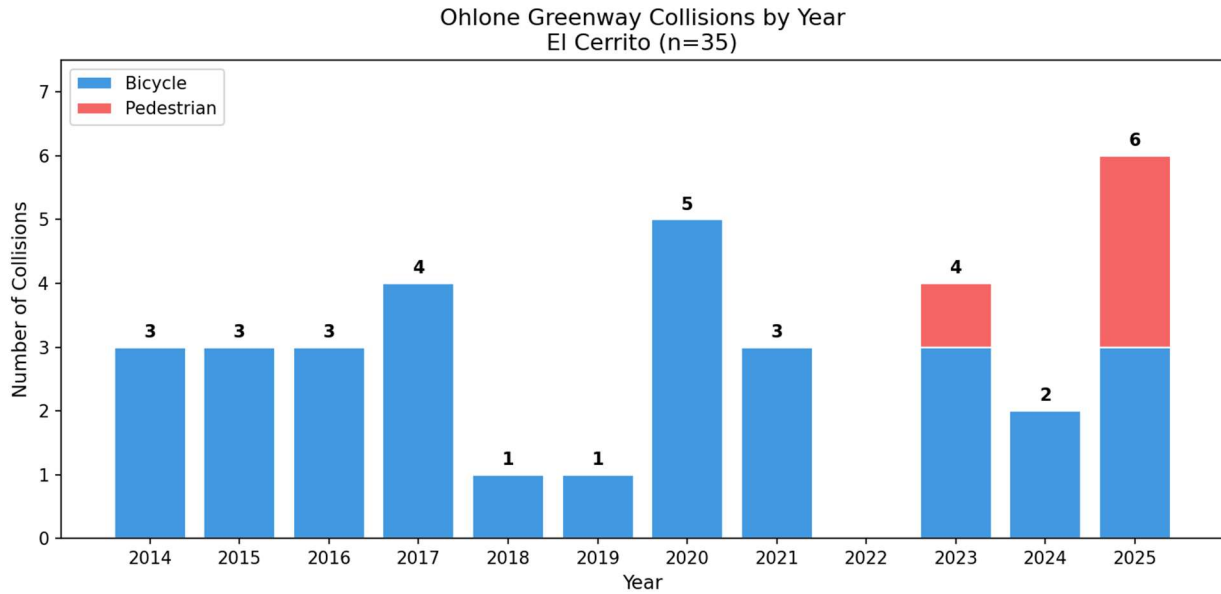


Figure 2: Bicycle and pedestrian collisions with vehicles at all crossings of the Ohlone Greenway, by year. There is no trend towards less collisions and the most recent year's data (2025) had the most collisions.