

Recreation and Commuter Bicycle Trends on the Paseo del Bosque and North Diversion Channel Trails



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Background and Count Methodology

In coordination with the City of Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Department, the Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO) manages seven permanent Eco Counters, which collect bicycle/pedestrian counts at different trail networks within the City of Albuquerque. A permanent counter is an automated device located at a site collecting data 24 hours per day/365 days per year. Data is transmitted from the counter to the cloud daily at midnight. Each of these seven counters collect the number of pedestrians and bicyclists that pass by the counter 24 hours per day/365 days per year.

There are a variety of factors that can have an impact on travel patterns such as climate, culture, or whether a roadway feels comfortable for someone to choose to walk or bicycle for a trip. Even though difficult to collect, having access to non-motorized data is helpful to not only better understand these travel patterns, but also target limited infrastructure investments to key locations to have an impact for pedestrians and/or bicyclists.

Permanent Count Locations:

- Paseo del Nordeste Trail near Erna Fergusson (installed May 2014)
- El Pueblo near the Rail Runner station (installed May 2014)
- Paseo del Bosque Trail just north of Montañño (installed October 2017)
- Paseo del Bosque Trail just south of Central near Tingley Beach (installed October 2017)
- North Diversion Channel Trail just south of Indian School (installed October 2017)
- North Diversion Channel Trail near Journal Center (installed October 2017)
- Paseo de las Montañas Trail at Jerry Cline Park (installed October 2017)

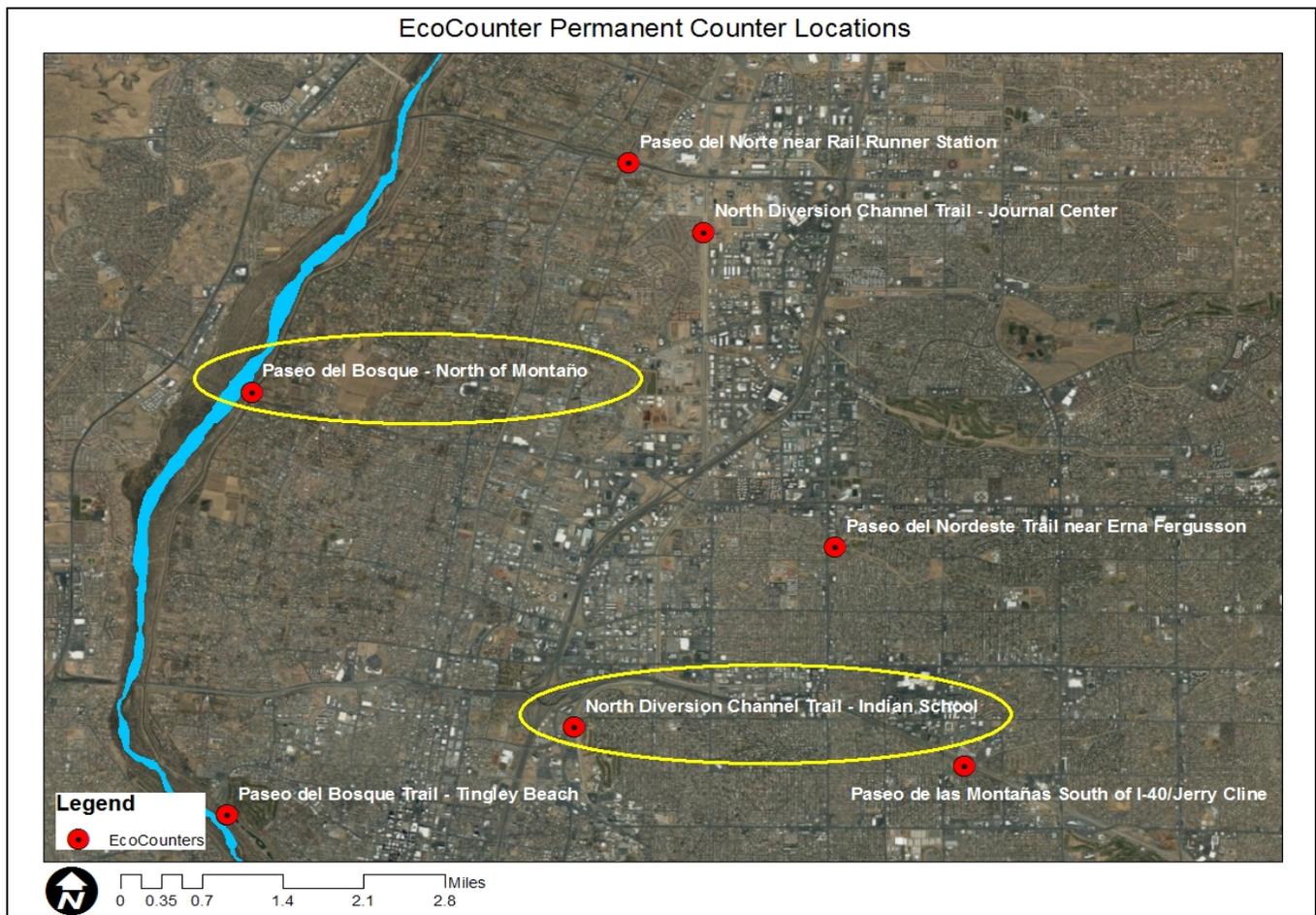


Figure 1 Map showing the locations of seven Eco Counters. Yellow circled counters were reviewed.

This review focused on two of Albuquerque’s most popular trail networks: the Paseo del Bosque Trail (Bosque Trail) North of Montaño Road and the North Diversion Channel Trail (NDC Trail) at Indian School. For these counters, data from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018, was queried and analyzed. The Paseo del Bosque and North Diversion Channel trails are the two longest paved multi-use trails within the City of Albuquerque area. The trails are nearly parallel to one another, in the North-South direction, but the North Diversion Channel Trail spans 8.7 miles connecting the University of New Mexico to the Balloon Fiesta Park. The Bosque Trail spans 16 miles connecting the South Valley to Alameda Open Space.

Data Findings

The data revealed that the Paseo del Bosque Trail near Montaño experienced more bicycle and pedestrian use than any other trail counted within the City of Albuquerque. In 2018, pedestrians and bicyclists passed by the Eco Counter at this location more than 233,000 times.

According to the data collected so far for these count locations, these trail networks were used by cyclists differently. Based on analysis of the Eco Counter bicyclist data, it can be assumed that a greater percentage of bicyclists on the North Diversion Channel Trail were commuters as opposed to recreational riders. The opposite was true for the Paseo del Bosque Trail near Montaño, where the majority of cyclists used the trail recreationally.

These assumptions are based on the AM and PM peak periods for each trail for data from January 1, 2018-December 31, 2018. Peak periods coincide with traditional workday schedules, Monday-Friday 8:00AM to 5:00PM. A trail used to commute to work will likely share morning and evening ‘rush hour’ trends from 6:00AM-8:00AM and 4:00PM-6:00PM, respectively. A trail used primarily for recreational activities will see the greatest number of users in off-peak periods.

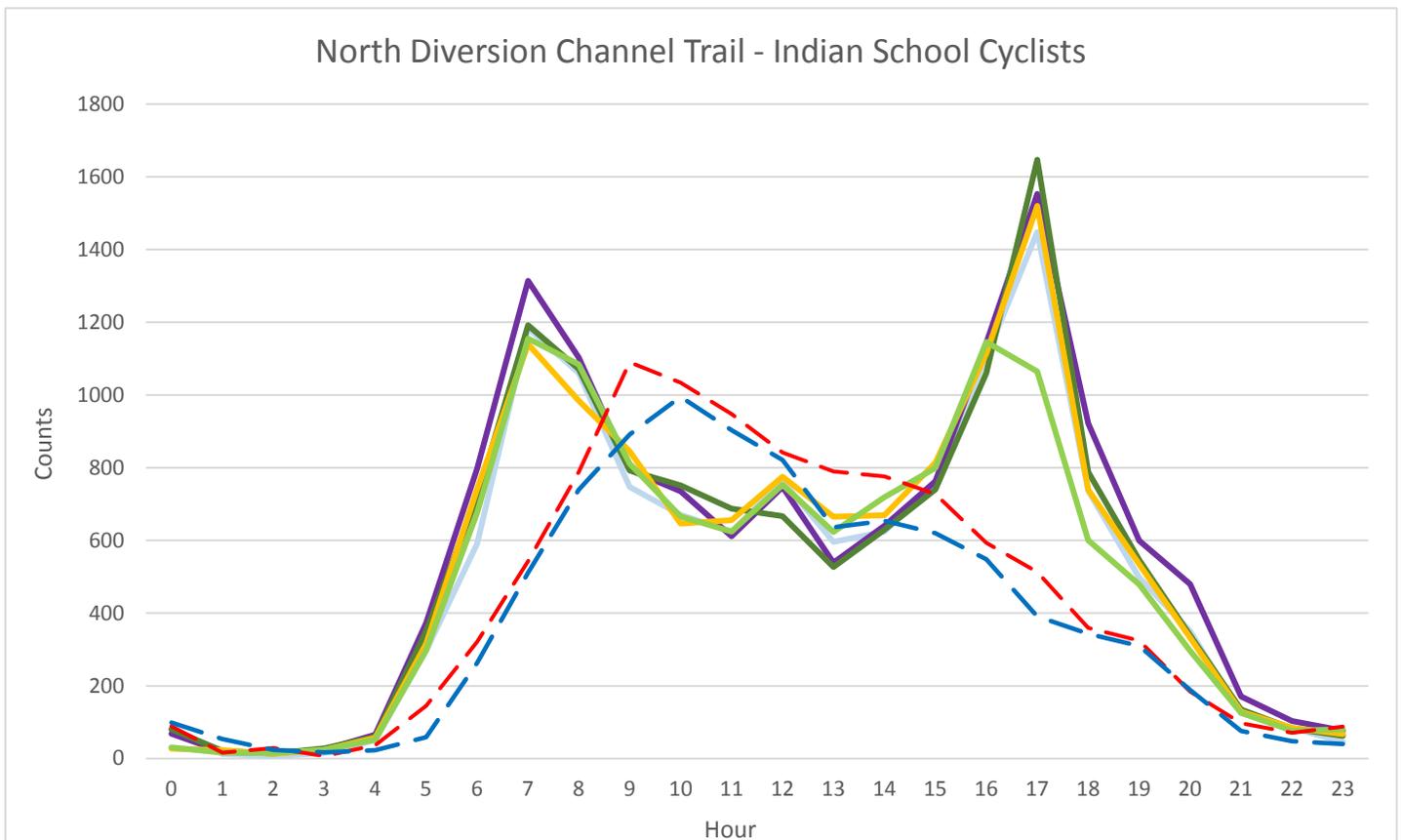


Figure 2 This graphic shows the total number of bicyclists who passed by EcoCounter on the North Diversion Channel Trail near Indian School during 2018.

The North Diversion Trail experienced two major peaks in bicycle traffic from 6:00AM – 8:00AM and 4:00PM – 6:00PM every weekday, Monday through Friday. On the weekends, the traffic counts peaked only once at 9:00AM before gradually decreasing throughout the afternoon. These different weekday-weekend trends reflect the commuter and recreational behaviors described above.

The presence of these pronounced peaks occurring at the early morning and evening hours on weekdays suggests that a large portion of the bicycle traffic experienced on the North Diversion Channel is commuter traffic.



Figure 3 A view of the counter on the North Diversion Channel Trail just south of Indian School.

Now consider the graph below showing the 2018 traffic count data for the Paseo del Bosque Trail recorded at a location North of Montañó.

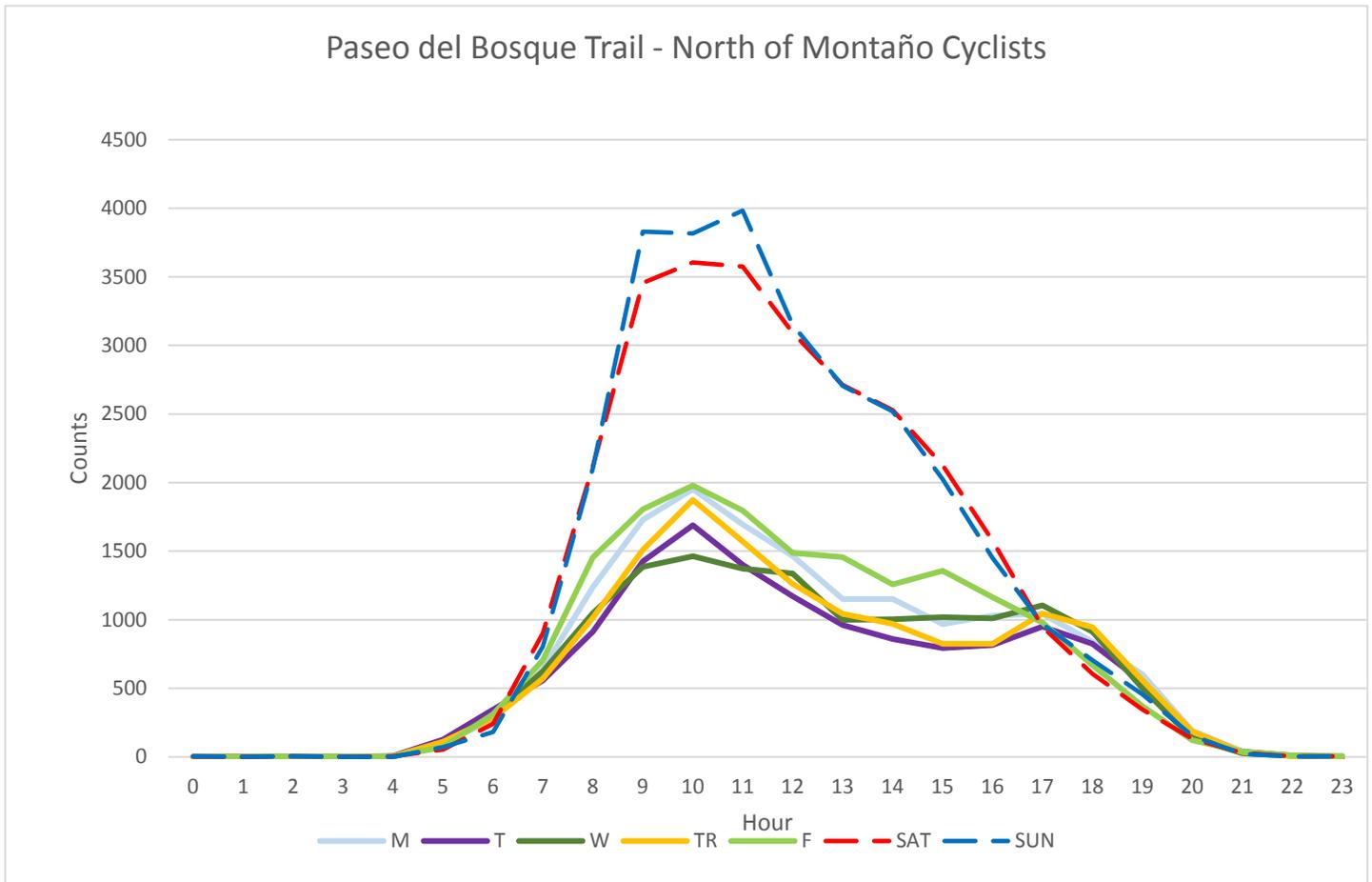


Figure 4 This graphic shows the total number of bicyclists who passed by EcoCounter at the Bosque Trail North of Montañó during 2018.

The Paseo del Bosque Trail experienced a single distinct peak each day of the week, even weekdays. Additionally, the peak occurred from 9:00AM-10:00AM in the morning, the same time as that of weekends on the North Diversion. Based on this characteristic of the count distribution, it illustrated that the Paseo del Bosque Trail was being used primarily for recreation rather than a commuting route.

Based on data, it is worth noting that the Paseo del Bosque is by-far the most used trail in the City of Albuquerque. In fact, the Paseo del Bosque experienced a larger total number of users in the morning commuting hours. However, this analysis showed that the percentage of total users who use the trail at these periodic weekday commuting hours is less compared to the North Diversion Trail.



Figure 5 A view of the counter on the Paseo del Bosque Trail North of Montañío.

Count Location	Total Number of Weekly Bicyclists	% of Bicyclists Traveling Weekday AM and PM Peak Hours	% of Bicyclists Traveling on Weekend
Paseo del Bosque Trail near Tingley Beach	233,275	33.3%	40.7%
Paseo del Bosque N. of Montañío	178,494	32.2%	44.2%
North Diversion Channel Trail near Indian School	120,078	48.8%	22.0%
North Diversion Channel Trail near Journal Center	141,897	48.8%	29.3%
Paseo del Nordeste	90,238	45.7%	25.8%
Paseo del Norte near Rail Runner	67,271	49.0%	34.8%
Paseo de las Montañas	87,730	49.4%	31.5%

**This analysis only accounts for AM Hours from 06:00 – 08:00 and PM Hours from 16:00 – 18:00, for January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018.*

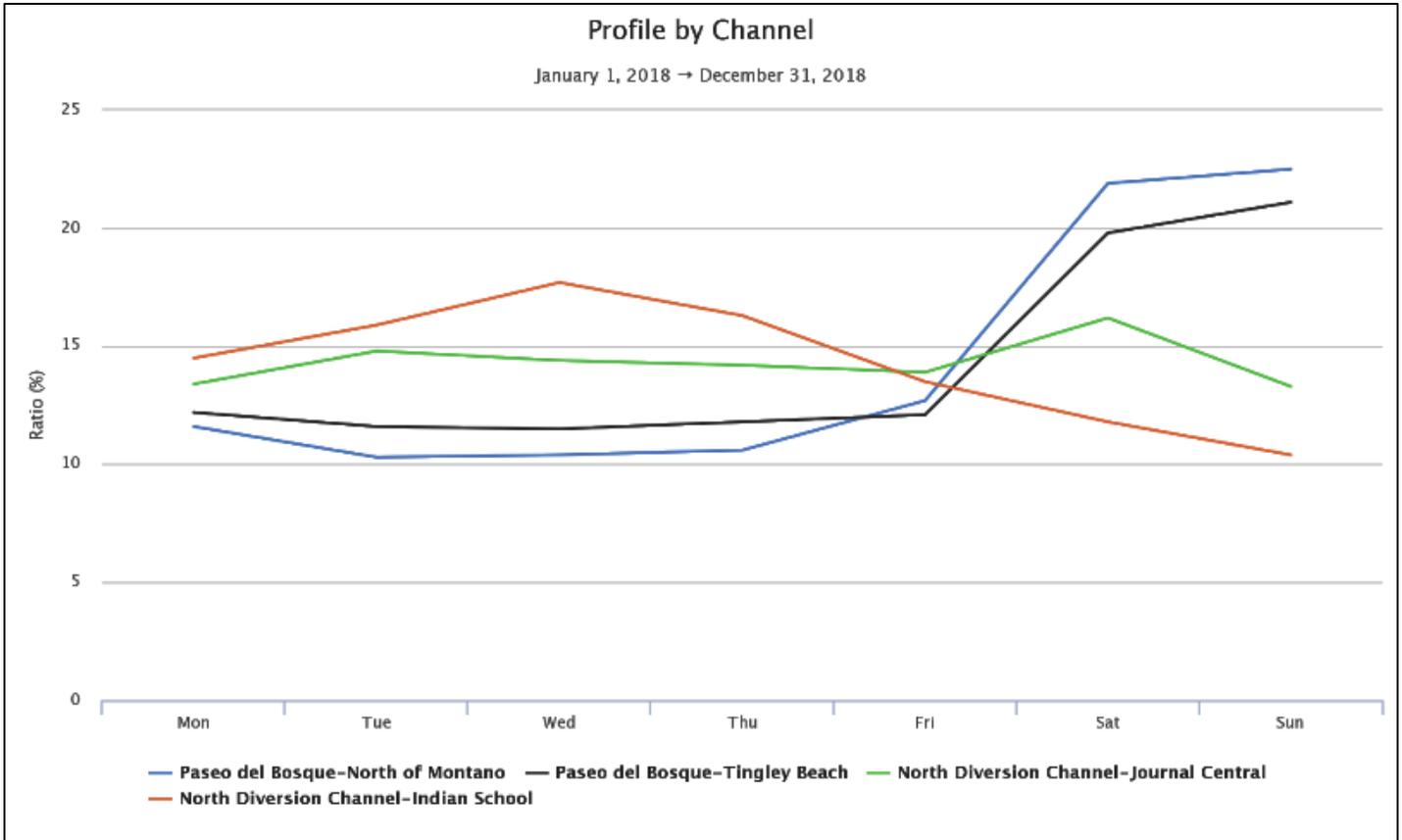


Figure 6 Bicycle traffic at each trail on any given day of the week as a percentage of the total.

There are two other permanent Eco Counters on the Bosque Trail and the NDC Trail. The second counter on the Bosque trail is located near Tingley Beach and the second NDC counter is located near the Journal Center. The graph above provides further support to this report’s conclusions. The chart shows bicycle traffic experienced by each trail on any given day of the week as a percentage of the total number of counts. Notice that the North Diversion Channel trail (Orange and Green Lines) maintains a higher ratio during the week compared to the Paseo del Bosque (Blue and Black Lines). The opposite is true on weekends.

Understanding how the trails are used can help guide surrounding planning and infrastructure decisions in the future. As the region works to make active transportation safe, easy, and accessible for more people, it is critical to remember the role of major multi-use trails such as the Paseo del Bosque and North Diversion Channel because they cannot only have an impact for recreational users, but also commuters.