



Peter Bruce, Consultant ■ Since 1991

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Contact: Todd Messelt

Media Line Communications
952.426.0009 (new number)
612.961.2971 cell
tmesselt@medialinecom.com

Peter Bruce
Pedestrian Studies
612-275-5541
pbruceceo@aol.com

Study shows up-tick in downtown Minneapolis skyway traffic

New occupancy and a stepped-up workforce in key buildings helped push downtown Minneapolis skyway traffic to ten-year highs in some areas, while a lagging consumer economy curtailed sidewalk traffic along the retail- and restaurant-heavy Nicollet Mall. Significant increases are predicted for 2010 overall, especially near the new Target Field.

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.— Skyway foot traffic volumes in downtown Minneapolis were up in 2009, according to the latest report from Peter Bruce of Pedestrian Studies. The 2009 report shows a 4-percent increase in the median average traffic volume at the 10 skyway locations sampled in 2008 and 2009. Minneapolis-based Pedestrian Studies has been conducting the annual skyway and sidewalk pedestrian counts since 1991.

The study's annual report is used primarily by downtown property owners, building managers and retailers to gauge the level of pedestrian activity in and around their buildings and to help determine lease rates for commercial properties. The privately funded report is also available for public purchase through Pedestrian Studies.

According to Bruce, half of the retail locations involved in the skyway study are seeing traffic levels above the yearly average volumes seen over the last decade.

“All of the buildings studied reported some increases in traffic,” Bruce said, “and the increases at skyway locations ranged from four to 17 percent.” He said the buildings studied this year included City Center, Gaviidae Common, Northstar Center, Fifty South Sixth Street and 225 South Sixth Street.

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5218 Eleventh Avenue South ■ Minneapolis Minnesota 55417
612.827.8080 ■ f 612.827.8181 ■ pbruceceo@aol.com

www.pedestrianstudies.com

Study details

Highest skyway volumes

As was the case in 2008, the highest daily volume was recorded at the intersection of City Center's south and east skyway corridors, where counters logged about 27,000 trips per day. City Center's east skyway (which links the building to the Gaviidae Common shopping center) and the south skyway (which connects to Macy's department store) saw an equal split of roughly 13,500 per day. The two skyways ranked first and second in volume among the locations studied. The Northstar Center food court escalator connection to the skyway recorded 13,000 pedestrian trips per day and ranked third on the list of busiest locations studied.

Significant increases in skyway volumes due to more workers in some buildings

The renovation and new occupancy of the Renaissance Square Building combined with increased occupancy in the adjacent Fifty South Sixth pushed foot traffic up by 17 percent over last year's numbers in the Fifty South Sixth skyway. The skyway, which spans the Nicollet Mall, links Fifty South Sixth to Gaviidae Common. New occupancy in the Capella Tower of the 225 South Sixth building also helped push foot traffic between that building and the Northstar Center skyway to an 11 percent increase over 2008.

Nicollet Mall lunch traffic down slightly

Volume on the Nicollet Mall's busiest sidewalks between 8th and 9th Streets was 8,000 during the 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. lunch period – about 7 percent lower than the 8,500 trips recorded in 2008. Bruce attributed the change to general declines in the nation's restaurant and retail industries, noting that shopping and dining traffic at Target, Walgreen's, Barnes & Noble and nearby restaurants have a significant impact on the block's pedestrian activity. Nicollet Mall traffic between 5th and 6th streets remained steady but is poised to jump dramatically 2010

Morning and afternoon rush hour counts by Mall LRT station remain strong

Sidewalk traffic was measured 7-9 a.m. and 4-6 p.m. on the Nicollet Mall between 5th and 6th Streets, to document the continued strength of pedestrian activity around the LRT Station at 5th Street and the Mall. The combined rush hour volume was 5,824, essentially the same as the 2008 volume of 6,003 pedestrian trips.

New entertainment district amenities will attract more walkers to all of downtown

Bruce predicts that Nicollet Mall volumes grow in 2010 as a result of the New North star Commuter Rail / Hiawatha Light Rail connection at the Target Field Transit Hub, which began operating in December. Commuter rail passengers are now walking or using light rail to get to work downtown, at the airport and at the Mall of America. The Nicollet Mall vicinity will be a major destination for these passengers. Pedestrian Studies estimates Nicollet Mall traffic volume near 5th Street will increase of at least 10 percent in 2010.

New Twins game foot traffic to enhance food and retail vitality beyond entertainment district

When the Twins open their season at Target Field in April, 75 percent of the 42,000 fans are expected to access the ballpark from 6th and 7th Streets along the Target Center on First Avenue North, just west of Hennepin Avenue. On game days, Bruce estimates retail businesses in the district will see 5-10 times the current volumes of foot traffic. The proximity of the entertainment district and retail core to the ballpark will create a new vitality for downtown retail. An analysis by Pedestrian Studies shows that the walking time from IDS Center to the Ballpark Plaza access on 6th Street at First Avenue North is 9 minutes. Most

of the Entertainment District is within a 5-minute walk time of the outfield edge of the ballpark. This will create a new positive dimension to the downtown walking experience for baseball fans and existing downtown users, Bruce said.

Bruce, who is credited with the ability to assess which routes pedestrians will take at key decision points, said “Identifying the type of walking traffic – commuters, shoppers, recreational walkers – moving through an area is becoming more important as these traffic segments co-mingle in a busy place like the new Target Field Transit Hub. These traffic segments respond to different aesthetic and visual cues and need to be managed to optimize the pedestrian experience.”

About Pedestrian Studies

Located in Minneapolis, Minn., Pedestrian Studies is a national consulting firm that specializes in the analysis of retail and leisure foot-traffic patterns and their roles in shaping urban environments. Pedestrian Studies’ clients include city and county governments, commercial districts, shopping centers, individual businesses, building owners and property managers. The firm’s services include pedestrian traffic counts, traffic projection studies and traffic-shaping programs. Specialized studies provide clients with strategies for determining shopper characteristics and attracting more foot traffic to specific locations. Other studies help clients examine the impacts of special events, public art, weather, new construction and transit.

About Peter Bruce

Pedestrian Studies owner Peter Bruce founded the company 1991. Since that time, Bruce has led more than 40 downtown pedestrian counts, traffic projection studies, shopper intercept studies, retail recruitment brochures and traffic-shaping projects in dozens of cities, including New York, Los Angeles, Houston, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Minneapolis and St. Paul. He’s been conducting annual pedestrian traffic counts in Minneapolis and St. Paul for 17 years. Property owners and managers have adopted the resulting data as a standard for gauging foot traffic. Bruce also consults clients on retail market analysis and helps them develop strategies for physical enhancements to downtown properties.

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Potential sponsors of counting locations in this privately funded study may call Peter Bruce at 612-275-5541.