



MEDIA NOTICE
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Annual pedestrian count study shows RNC's surprising impact on downtown Minneapolis. Another study shows that downtown foot traffic doubles during Farmers' Markets.

Minneapolis and St. Paul skyways and sidewalks saw hotspots of increased foot traffic in 2008. Overall, however, average daily volumes were nearly the same as 2007. Both years counts were above the historic average.

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN– The overall daily volume of pedestrian traffic in downtown Minneapolis remained mostly unchanged between fall 2007 and fall 2008, according figures released today by Pedestrian Studies, a Minneapolis consulting firm that measures downtown foot traffic each fall. The figures were included in the annual report to downtown property owners and building managers. Real estate interests use the data to determine lease rates and promote their retail and office space.

Volumes were collected at 29 skyway and sidewalk locations throughout downtown Minneapolis.

In addition to general traffic trend figures, a special study found that last September's Republican National Convention boosted Nicollet Mall traffic by 50 to 80 percent. Another special studied shows a doubling of lunchtime pedestrian traffic during on days when the mall plays host to the farmers' market.

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General findings

The busiest skyway-level locations surveyed in 2008 were:

- 1) IDS Center - Baker Center (16,878 trips).
- 2) Retek on the Mall – Target Store- U.S. Bancorp Center (16,123 trips).
- 3) City Center - Gaviidae Common (14,778 trips).
- 4) City Center - Macy's (14,300 trips).
- 5) IDS Center escalator – (13,495 trips).
- 6) Northstar Center West skyway junction with escalator (12,905 trips).

Commuter foot traffic between workplaces, parking and transit connections was mostly unchanged. Lunch traffic (between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.) was down slightly in tandem with the nation's declining economy.

The median change in volumes from historic levels among all of the locations was a negligible 1 percent. However, some locations in the retail core continued to enjoy volumes more than 10 percent above their 17-year historical average (i.e., since the first study was conducted in 1991). For example, City Center corridors continue to see annual increases, the count showed, a likely result of the mall's growing roster of stores and restaurants. The City Center/50 South Sixth Street skyway saw a 20 percent increase over its 5-year average volume.

Overall volumes have decreased by four percent between 2007 and 2008, which is not statistically significant in a study of this number of locations. Some locations saw 5 to 15 percent decreases in daily volumes, mostly based on decreases in occupancies of nearby office buildings. An additional factor was the slight decrease in lunch and rush hour traffic levels reflecting weakening national trends.

Downtown pedestrian corridors that saw large increases in foot traffic were either in or near buildings that added employees in the past year.

To no great surprise, the busiest sidewalks surveyed in Minneapolis were on the Nicollet Mall between 8th and 9th Street. The area saw 21,000 trips per day on average in 2008 and has had the highest concentration of pedestrian traffic since the first count in 1991.

Interestingly, the busy 8th – 9th Street block recorded a commuting period volume (7-9 am plus 4-6 pm) of 6,943. That's only 19 percent higher than the 5th- 6th block of Nicollet Mall near the LRT station at the edge of the retail core, which saw 6,003 trips. Foot traffic by there is projected to rise consistently.

Nicollet Mall traffic remains steady overall

Traffic volumes on the Nicollet Mall block have been measured annually since the mid 1990's. Volumes between 8th and 9th Street have been collected for Midwest Plaza (managed by Northmarq). The Downtown Council has sponsored counts on other blocks.

In 2008, 21,057 trips were counted on the 8th-9th Street block, about 3 percent higher than the

20,000 trips measured in 2006 and 2007. Sidewalk traffic has averaged 21,200 trips on the block since the downtown Target Store opened in 2002. Daily volumes were approximately 14,000 trips per day mall between 9th and 12th Streets prior to the new development.

2008 Special Studies

Republican National Convention, Sept 1-4 in St. Paul

It probably comes as no great surprise that sidewalk traffic tripled in areas around the Xcel Center in Saint Paul during the RNC. Volumes on Market Street in downtown Saint Paul as measured from noon to 1 p.m. between Landmark Center and the Hamm Plaza were estimated at 1,300 trips per hour compared to a typical weekday volume of 300 trips per hour. Retail core storefronts on the St Peter Street sidewalk of the Hamm Building between 7th Place and 6th Street enjoyed 1,800 trips instead of the usual 500.

RNC's surprising impact on downtown Minneapolis

More intriguing was the convention's impact on downtown Minneapolis – 10 Miles from ground zero in St. Paul. The count found that Nicollet Mall traffic foot traffic jumped to between 26 to 60 percent more trips per hour during the convention. In the retail core, the 8th – 9th Street Midwest Plaza block of Nicollet Mall climbed 26 percent from a typical 2,700 trips to a Convention Day volume of 3,400 trips between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. On the Nicollet Mall 11th – 12th block, the 10 -11 a.m. volume was 500 during a normal day and 800 during the convention.

Minneapolis Farmers' Market doubles downtown foot traffic

During summer months, Nicollet Mall traffic volumes were measured on summer days with and without a Farmers' Market. The study showed that the market boosts downtown foot traffic by 35 percent. On the Midwest Plaza side of Nicollet Mall between 8th-9th Streets, there were 1,700 pedestrians during 11 am - noon on the Market day. This compares to a normal weekday volume of approximately 900. Between 10th and 11th Streets, there were 800 pedestrians during 10–11 a.m. on a market day compared to a normal volume of approximately 800. In a previous study, skyway traffic over the mall dropped by 30 percent on market days.

“Although Farmers Market days double the mall's sidewalk traffic, walking volumes effectively triple from the pedestrian's point of view,” says Pedestrian Studies owner Peter Bruce. “In the same way that the wind chill factor makes frigid winter days feel even colder, the farmers market makes downtown foot traffic seem even busier because pedestrians are squeezed into a much narrower corridor.

About Pedestrian Studies

Located in Minneapolis, Minn., Pedestrian Studies is a national consulting firm that specializes in the study and analysis of retail foot-traffic patterns and their impacts on urban environments. Pedestrian Studies' clients range from city governments to 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 things like special events, public art, weather, new construction and transit.