

Executive Summary

Pedestrian Activity in the Chicago Downtown Area



prepared for

Chicago Department of Transportation

by
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and
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INTRODUCTION

This study is designed to identify the shifting patterns of pedestrian activity in downtown Chicago. With slight modifications, this study replicates the methodology used in the 1981, 1989 and 1999 downtown Chicago pedestrian counts. During the summer of 2007, the study team counted over three million pedestrians at 510 sites. The study covered the entire Loop plus areas in River North, Streeterville, the West Loop and the South Loop (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Map of Study area



As in the three previous pedestrian studies, weekday counts covered a 10-hour period from 7:45 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Saturday counts started at 9 a.m. and ended at 6 p.m., for a 9-hour day. At many locations, extending the count period would have resulted in considerably higher volumes, but would have complicated comparisons with earlier studies.

This study has two written products, this executive summary and a more complete report under separate cover. There are also spreadsheets that include a graph for each of the count sites showing the traffic for each 15-minute period.

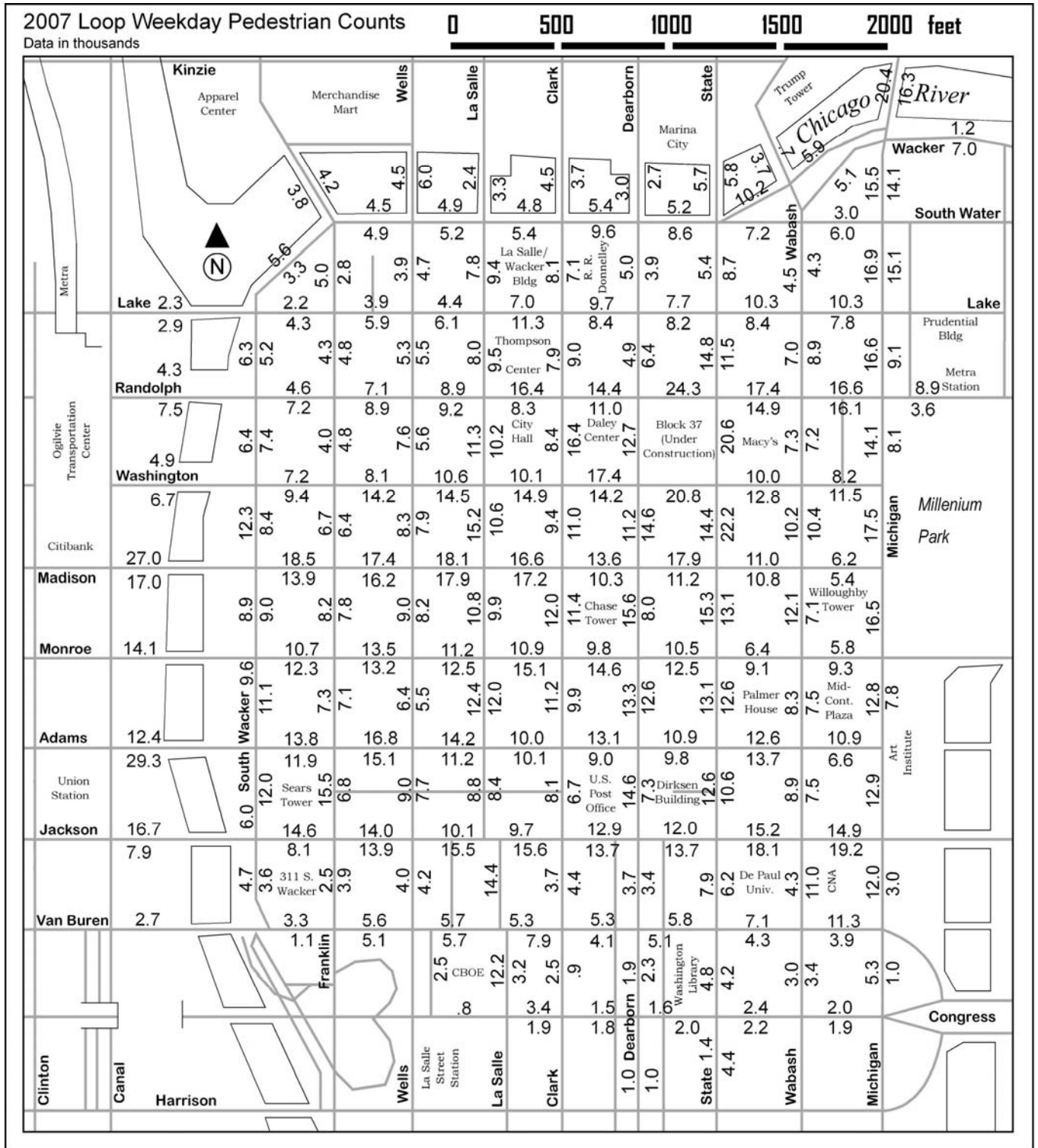
THE LOOP

The Loop has 335 count locations (Figure 2). Ten-hour pedestrian counts at most of these locations are between 5,000 and 20,000. The highest counts are associated with access routes to and from the Loop. The highest count, 29,000, was on the south side of the Adams Street bridge at Union Station followed by the 27,000 pedestrians that crossed the north side of Madison Street bridge at the Ogilvie Transportation Center (Metra station). Pedestrian traffic increased in the morning and evening peak compared to 1999 and declined slightly in the mid-day period.

THE BRIDGES

Since 1999 pedestrian traffic on the South Branch east-west bridges increased by eight percent. By contrast, the traffic on the Main Branch north-south bridges from Michigan Avenue to Franklin Street increased by two percent. Together the bridge traffic has grown by six percent in the last seven years.

Figure 2



NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE – North of the River

Weekday Counts. In the period from 1999 to 2007, North Michigan Avenue weekday pedestrian traffic increased by approximately one percent with relatively minor fluctuations from site to site (Figure 3). The highest pedestrian volume is at Water Tower Place (over 32,000), very similar to the level at the Wrigley Building at the south end. Since 1986, weekday pedestrian traffic has increased by almost 40 percent.

Saturday Counts. Since 1999, the Saturday counts on North Michigan Avenue have grown 16 percent (Figure 3). Moreover, they have doubled since 1986.

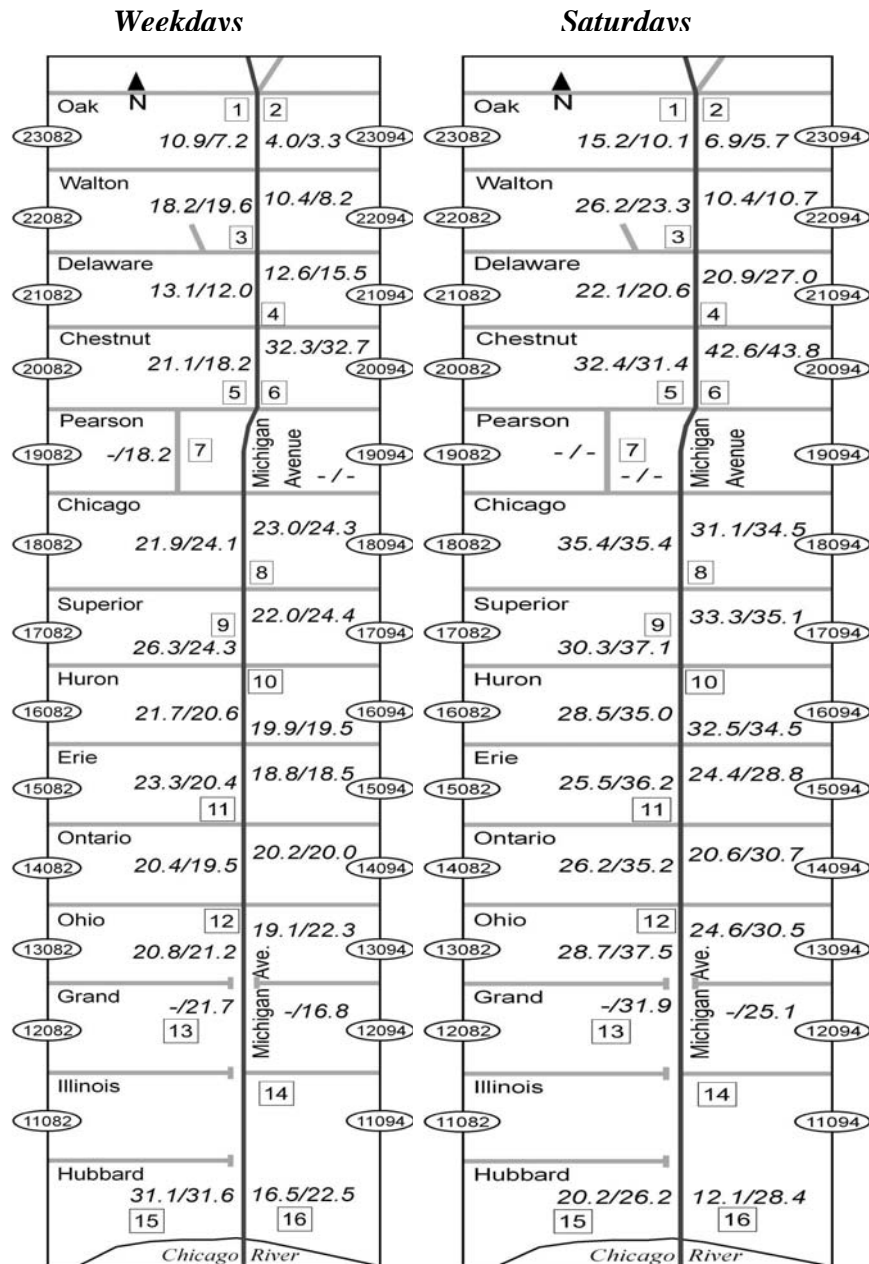
Figure 3

**1999/2007
North Michigan
Avenue Weekday
Counts**

Data in thousands
First number is 1999 count
- Indicates site not counted

1. One Magnificent Mile
2. Drake Hotel
3. 900 North Michigan
4. John Hancock Building
5. Borders
6. Water Tower Place
7. Water Tower
8. Neiman Marcus
9. Chicago Place
10. Niketown
11. Crate & Barrel
12. Chicago Marriott Hotel
13. Nordstrom
14. Tribune Tower
15. Wrigley Building
16. Equitable Building

○ Block-face ID



STATE STREET

Weekday Counts. During the summer of 2007 a number of sites were affected by construction, including Block 37, the Palmer House Hilton and the former Carson Pirie Scott building. Nevertheless, pedestrian traffic increased on most block faces compared to 1999. The highest total is over 22,000 on the east side of State Street between Madison Street and Washington Street. Between Jackson Boulevard and Lake Street, the 2007 total count was eight percent higher than in 1999. (Figure 4)

Saturday Counts. Pedestrian counts on Saturday cover a nine-hour period from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The highest count was on the east side of State Street between Washington Street and Madison Street with 21,000 pedestrians (Figure 5).

Figure 4

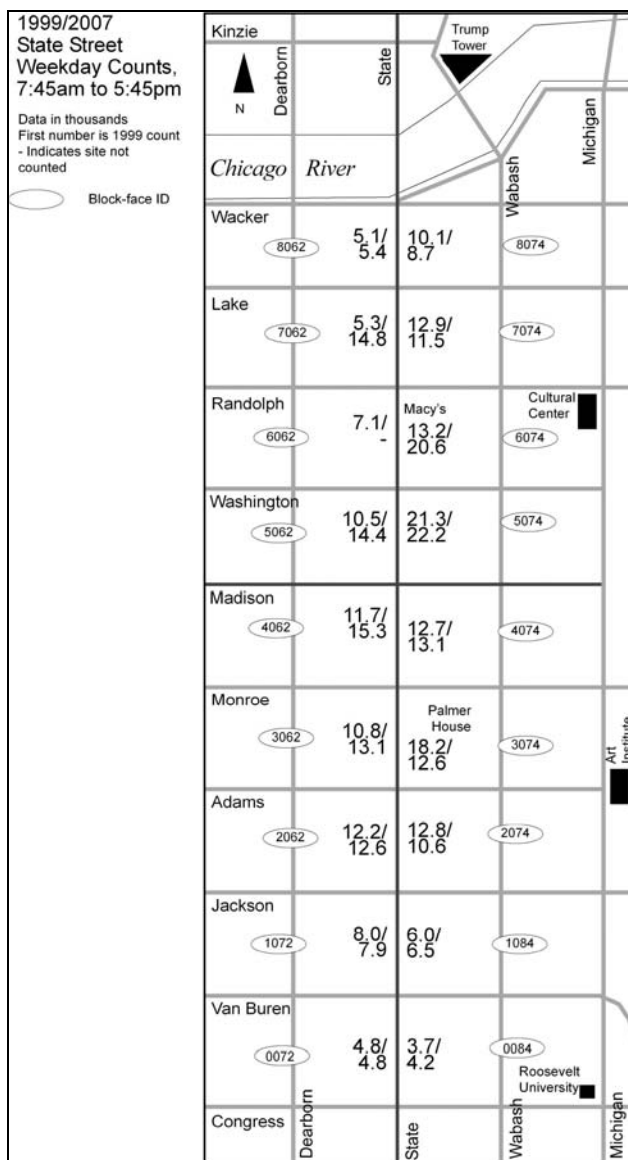
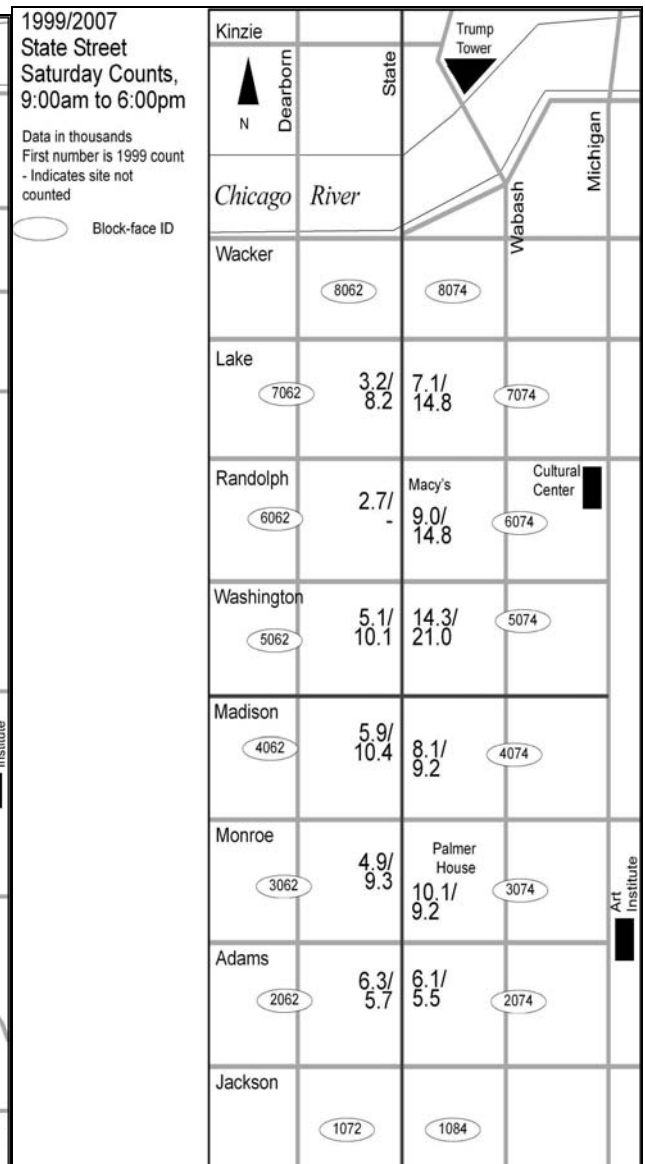


Figure 5

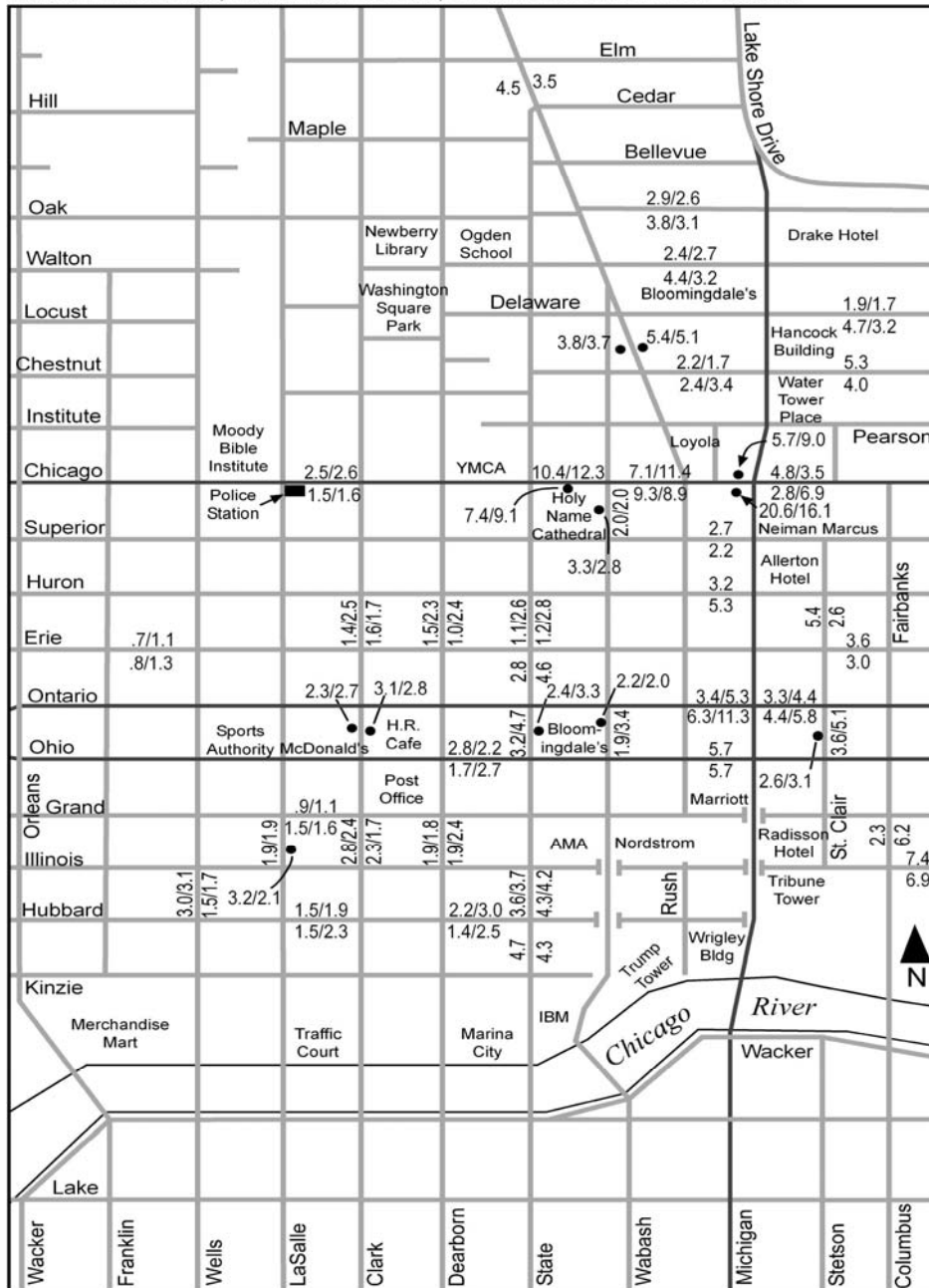


RIVER NORTH AND STREETERVILLE

While the River North and Streeterville pedestrian volumes are still considerably lower than they are on either Michigan Avenue or in the Loop, the growth from 1989 to 1999 exceeded 40 percent and since 1999 pedestrian traffic has grown another 14 percent (Figure 6). Of the 82 sites in the River North / Streeterville area, 17 now have volumes over 5,000.

Figure 6

River North and Streeterville Weekday, 7:45am - 5:45pm
 Data in thousands, 1999/2007 counts; lone numbers are 2007 counts



CONCLUSION

Chicago's downtown has remained vibrant with high pedestrian traffic levels. Not only is pedestrian activity high, but it is growing on weekends and in areas at the edge of the Loop as downtown grows outward.

This latest count of pedestrian traffic in 2007 shows that pedestrian growth is not uniform. Weekday totals for Loop pedestrian traffic remains at a level similar to that of 1999, but the number of pedestrians in the morning and evening peak are higher, with declines in mid-day traffic. Despite construction projects that reduced sidewalk width or closed sidewalks, weekday pedestrian traffic also grew as a whole on State Street. Traffic on the bridges into the Loop, in the North Loop, River North and Streeterville also increased.

Saturday pedestrian counts taken in the two main shopping streets downtown indicate that traffic on weekends has grown more than on weekdays. State Street pedestrian traffic grew significantly at 43 percent. North Michigan Avenue traffic also grew by 16 percent. The highest pedestrian count in the study area is still at Water Tower Place on Saturday at 44,000.

The two most noteworthy findings of this study are that (1) the geographic coverage of high pedestrian traffic volumes has grown and that (2) the Saturday counts have grown considerably. There is reason to believe that these two trends will continue. A large number of people now reside downtown and walking is an attractive option due to an enhanced pedestrian environment. With a number of developments planned or under construction, Chicago's downtown pedestrian traffic can be expected to remain high and increase over time.