

An Assessment of the Viva CalleSJ September 2025 Event in San José

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Introduction

Viva CalleSJ, an open-streets initiative in San José, CA, transforms city streets into car-free zones, encouraging walking, biking, and community interaction. The September 7, 2025, event had over 150,000 participants engaging along a nearly ten-mile route. Organized to foster active transportation, support local businesses, and build community, the event demonstrated its potential to enhance urban life in San Jose.

Study Methods

The assessment of Viva CalleSJ 2025 employed a mixed-method approach, incorporating quantitative and qualitative data collection to evaluate the event's impact. Data were gathered through surveys of participants, interviews with businesses and other and City of San José officials, and observational analysis during the event. An intercept survey was distributed along the route to capture participants' demographics, reasons for attending, travel modes, physical activity, spending patterns, and perceptions of the event. The survey, available in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese, yielded insights into participant demographics and engagement, with a sample (n=490) representing an estimated 0.003% based on the projected attendance of 150,000. The researchers mapped attendees' home postal codes to define the event's attendance shed, or the geographic area from which participants were drawn. Both the survey and additional field observations assessed participant behaviors, engagement levels, and the use of space, providing additional context on opportunities and barriers. Together, these methods offered a comprehensive evaluation of the community and economic impacts of Viva CalleSJ 2025.

Findings

Key insights from Viva CalleSJ on September 7, 2025 include:

- **Diverse Attendance and Demographics:** The intercept survey of 490 participants reflected diverse attendance, spanning different age groups, genders, and racial/ethnic backgrounds. However, some demographic gaps were noted, with respondents more likely to identify as White. Asians, and residents older than 64, were underrepresented compared to the broader San José population, indicating a potential need for more inclusive outreach efforts.
- **Modes of Event Access and On-Site Mobility:** Attendees used a wide range of transportation modes to reach Viva CalleSJ. Over 58% arrived by bicycle, an increase of nearly 9% over 2024. 12.5% arrived on foot, again an increase over 2024. Arrival by car was stable at 30%. Modes such as scooters and shared-mobility options saw a marked increase compared to 2024 (7.2% vs 2.9%). Once at Viva CalleSJ, most participants traveled through the event by bicycle (68.6%), with others walking or running, and smaller groups using scooters, skateboards, skates, or wheelchairs.
- **Repeat Participation and Event Awareness:** Participants learned about Viva CalleSJ through a mix of channels. Word of mouth showed the biggest growth of influence in comparison with 2024 (27.3% vs 38.8% of responses). Previous attendance was the second greatest influence, with over 30% of responses, an increase of over 10% from 2024. Social media platforms also served as primary sources. Traditional outreach, including flyers and local media, also played

a meaningful role. Overall, the event's multi-channel approach effectively reached both new and returning participants.

- **Duration of Attendance and Activity Participation:** Most participants planned to spend several hours at Viva CalleSJ, engaging in popular activities like visiting community resources (69.4%) and enjoying live entertainment (61.2%). Respondents suggested adding more entertainment, vendors, mobility/recreation activities, and support services—such as water stations and restrooms—to further enhance future Viva CalleSJ events.

Economic Impact: The event had a positive economic effect, with 78.5% of participants planning to spend money during the event, averaging \$53.67 each. This strong engagement with vendors and local businesses demonstrated Viva CalleSJ's role in supporting the local economy. The estimated total economic impact of the Viva CalleSJ September 2025 event is \$4.7M.

Considerations for Future Open Streets Events in San Jose

The evaluation highlights opportunities for future open streets events in San Jose:

- **Broaden Outreach Efforts:** Viva CalleSJ continues to show strong overall diversity among participants; however, Asian residents and adults 65+ remain underrepresented relative to San José's population. Targeted outreach—especially through culturally specific media, neighborhood associations, senior centers, and community-based partners—could help close these gaps.
- **Enhance Access and Mobility Options:** Bicycling and walking both increased in 2025, yet nearly one-third of attendees still arrived by car. Expanding incentives for alternative modes—such as free or discounted transit, first/last-mile micromobility options, and additional secure bike parking—could reduce

traffic to- and from- the event as well as parking demand at activity hubs.

- **Address Minor Negative Impacts:** While reports of negative impacts remained low, respondents most frequently cited traffic management, crowding, and parking challenges. Enhancing wayfinding and crowd management could help address these concerns.

About the Authors

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To Learn More

For more details about the study, download the full report at transweb.sjsu.edu/research/2542



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