



## **Surprise: shoppers go out of their way to avoid ban on plastic grocery bags**

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Soaring on righteous fervor, the Austin City Council [in March](#) somehow neglected to make provision to punish citizens disloyal enough to shop outside of the limits of its ban on plastic grocery bags.

It seems, based on [a new study](#) by the [National Center for Policy Analysis](#), that shoppers facing the inconvenience in Los Angeles County have for the last year been sneaking across the ban borders to shop.

Overall, sales at stores inside the Polyethylene Wall were down by 3.3 percent. Sales just outside the wall were up by 3.4 percent, according to the survey of store managers in and out of Los Angeles County.

At nearly 80 percent of stores in the ban zone sales were off by nearly 6 percent. At 60 percent of the stores outside the zone sales were up by 9 percent.

Bag-ban managers in every store surveyed laid off at least one employee and staffing overall was down 10 percent, the study says. Employment at the outside stores was up, but by just 2.4 percent.

Add to that the amount of energy shoppers are expending to skirt the ban and you have what the Center's study refers to as unintended consequences.

It might be good to establish at this point that [National Center for Policy Analysis](#) is a nonprofit organization in the business of questioning government regulation while promoting a competitive and entrepreneurial free market.

Not a likely candidate to be giving advice to a City Council that regularly ignored past warnings of those unintended consequences and accepted as fact plastic bag cleanup costs that had been [mistakenly inflated by 366 percent](#).

But having been prescient enough to [make it a crime](#) for stores to use plastic bags after March of 2013, it isn't too late for the City Council to include penalties for people with the temerity to shop where they want to shop.