

Regional Bicycle- Pedestrian Plan Update

August 28, 2003

Final Report



**Chittenden County
Metropolitan Planning
Organization**

*Communities working together
to meet Chittenden County's
transportation needs*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) is developing an update to the 1993 Alternative Transportation Path Plan. The 1993 plan covered eight municipalities: Burlington, Colchester, Essex Junction, Essex Town, Shelburne, South Burlington, Williston and Winooski. Since then the CCMPO has been expanded to cover all eighteen communities in Chittenden County and this Plan encompasses these same communities.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance for the implementation of interconnected bicycle and pedestrian networks for transportation. The CCMPO and the federal government have set ambitious goals to increase the amount of bicycling and walking and to increase safety by reducing the number of crashes. Another purpose of this update is to broaden the 1993's Plan to include more of a focus on on-road bicycle facilities and pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks.

Pedestrian and bicycle networks are important in and of themselves but are critical components of a multi-modal system that serves all citizens and visitors in Chittenden County. The success of these networks is measured by the degree to which they are integrated with the planning and design of other modes of transportation such as bus, rail, ferry and automobiles.

Investing in pedestrian and bicycle facilities like sidewalks, shared use paths and on-road bicycle facilities not only assists the foot traveler and bicyclists to meet their traveling needs but can also lead to other quality of life and health improvements for individuals and the region as a whole. Biking and walking, in conjunction with transit, can play key roles in reducing traffic congestion.

Like the recently completed *Vermont Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Planning and Design Manual*, it is a fundamental principle and expectation of this Plan that all transportation projects will be planned, designed and constructed under the assumption that they will be used by pedestrians and bicyclists (except where specifically prohibited such as on limited access highways).

TYPES OF FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

A wide variety of bicycle and pedestrian facilities are available that can serve their needs. These include:

- Shared use paths,
- Sidewalks,
- Bicycle lanes,
- Paved shoulders,
- Wide curb lanes, and
- Shared lanes.

Key attributes of safe, functional and well used bicycle and pedestrian networks are:

- Continuity,
- Directness,
- Attractiveness, and
- Maintenance.

FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

This Plan recommends a regional networks of on-road bicycle facilities (309 miles) and shared use paths (117 miles) to provide high quality connections between communities and to major activity centers in Chittenden County and to neighboring counties, shown in Figure 1. The most important function of these networks is to identify corridors of *regional significance* from a bicycling and pedestrian perspective.

Appendix 2 contains a detailed list of proposed and existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities within each Chittenden County community, which form the basis for the regional networks. The regional networks do not, and should not, include all of the facilities shown on the local plans. The regional facilities promote walking and bicycling between or through the communities, while the local networks promote and provide more localized access and mobility. There are also some facilities in the regional plan that are not indicated in the municipal plans, either due to an unperceived need for the link at the local level, or the general exclusion of certain types of facilities.

Important considerations in the identification of these on-road and shared use path networks are:

- High quality connections between ‘Metropolitan’ and ‘Village’ Planning Areas (developed by the CCRPC for its regional plan process) should be the fundamental framework for determining the density of the network -- the number of facilities. These connections should accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians of all skill levels, where practical and feasible. In some corridors, this may be either by shared use path and/or on-road bicycle facility.
- A shared use path network should complement, not replace, an on-road bicycle facility network. In many corridors, both types of facilities are recommended.
- The networks should form the basis for priorities for future funding of CCMPO projects and planning.

Sidewalk priorities are identified in the 2000 CCMPO Pedestrian Policy and Sidewalk Plan for Chittenden County.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Implementation Plan provides information on Baseline Costs for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, identifies funding sources and funding strategies, outlines current spending levels and potential funding targets and emphasizes a number of Implementation Strategies as follows:

- Give highest priority to multi-jurisdiction projects for construction and planning funds.
- Give priority to projects that provide connections between Villages and Metropolitan planning areas.
- Give priority to projects within Village and Metropolitan Planning Areas.

- Pedestrian accommodations should be an essential part of all commercial and residential developments/redevelopments and thereby should be funded by the developer.
- When planning and designing pedestrian-bicycle facilities, design to meet anticipated demand and the needs of the ‘design bicyclist.’
- Ensure that full consideration of bicycle-pedestrian facilities is provided in the use of all federal transportation funds by the CCMPO, as required by federal law. This means including these facilities, where practicable and feasible, in all traditional roadway projects.
- Expand the use of state funding used for bicycle and pedestrian projects by publicizing the flexible use of funds for standalone bicycle-pedestrian projects and for including bicycle-pedestrian facilities in traditional road and bridge projects.
- Develop an innovative mix of local funds to implement bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Maximize the use of private funding through fundraising and through the use of developer exactions or impact fees.
- Work to make every street bicycle and pedestrian compatible to the extent practicable, where bicycling and walking is not specifically prohibited
- Be open to and encourage flexibility in the application of design guidelines in the design of projects where true safety concerns are not compromised.
- Design with maintenance in mind through choice of materials and construction methods.
- Design with the appropriate level of anticipated demand for the facility and for the lowest skilled users expected to use the facility.
- Program on the order of 3% per year on average over the course of each three year funding cycle for standalone bicycle-pedestrian projects.
- Program on the order of 35 % per year of total funding (on average over the course of each three year funding cycle) to transportation projects that include a bicycle/pedestrian component.
- Work to increase the amount of funding programs available and diversify existing programs for use in maintaining shared use paths, on-road bicycle facilities and sidewalks.
- Advocate for the enforcement of motor vehicle laws and laws governing bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Advocate for the funding and implementation of Encouragement and Promotion strategies.
- Develop and implement a multi-faceted approach to education related to bicycle and pedestrian issues, focusing on safe operation and sharing the road.
- Endorse the guidelines being developed by VTrans for bicycle and pedestrian projects receiving funding through the CCMPO.

- To gauge the progress of and results from the Plan's implementation, it is recommended that the CCMPO adopt a series of bicycling and pedestrian-related performance measures that are reviewed every three years.
- Work with local, regional and statewide partners to improve the accident reporting system related to bicycling and walking. Incorporate comprehensive accident reporting to the degree possible, to include police reported accidents and hospital data.
- Create a line item in the CCMPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) annually obligating funds for sidewalk projects.

Funding Strategies. This Plan has identified a significant number of new facilities that likely will outstrip available public resources if implemented as standalone bicycle-pedestrian projects or limited to funds earmarked specifically for bicycle-pedestrian projects. Innovative funding and project programming can extend available funding. It is critical to take full advantage of funding that is available from all funding sources including federal, state, local and private sources. Many projects will not likely be implemented using dedicated bicycle-pedestrian funding but as part of a larger transportation project such as reconstruction of a roadway and adding shoulders or sidewalks.

EXISTING PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS

An extensive network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities is evolving in Chittenden County. This is taking place through a large number of cooperative efforts at a wide range of levels involving a large number of entities. An inventory of local facilities is included in the appendix.