

QUICKNOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLANNING

Communities desire better transportation choices and a transportation system that makes it easier to walk and bike for daily needs. People want the freedom to choose how to get to where they need to go. Bicycle and pedestrian planning involves integrating these priorities into routine planning processes such as zoning and plan making, and local governments have many resources at their disposal to assist with planning for and implementing these improvements.

Bicycle and pedestrian planning are especially effective in reducing automobile trips of less than three miles. National surveys show that around half of all trips are less than this distance, but 72 percent of these trips are made in cars. Even shifting a small portion of these short trips to walking and biking would greatly benefit local communities by reducing traffic congestion, increasing routine physical activity, improving public health, improving access to goods and services, and improving air quality by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Local governments can encourage walking and biking in communities by providing safe, accessible, welcoming environments for all users, and thoughtfully planning to promote universal access to accommodate everyone.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES FOR BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLANNING

The following strategies form a strong foundation for local governments when planning for bicycles and pedestrians.

Ensure comprehensive planning and zoning support mixed use, compact communities.

Communities can encourage biking and walking simply by changing land-use patterns and allowable density. Locations where jobs, housing, shopping, and other uses are more scattered impose greater difficulty for people to walk and bike to meet their daily needs. Pedestrian and bicycle planning begins with a community's comprehensive or general plan, and continues through zoning and subdivision codes, street standards, or design guidelines.

Create a communitywide master plan to prioritize streets and routes. Pedestrian master plans and bicycle master plans help prioritize locations for infrastructure improvements, and can be used to engage stakeholders in the planning process. It is important that these guidance documents be consistent with the municipality's comprehensive or general plan. Municipalities around the country have produced effective pedestrian and bicycle master plans to guide their long-term investments.

Rebalance infrastructure and urban design policies. Physical improvements to streets are important safety considerations. Over the last 50 years, many streets have been built to accommodate only automobiles, at the expense of other modes of transportation. This leads to an unbalanced system that increases traffic congestion and encourages more driving in a self-reinforcing cycle. Revised local government policies and capital improvements that rebalance streets are often grouped together as "complete streets" strategies. Some rebalancing may require changes to regional funding allocations and priorities to focus more on bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Try new solutions and outside-of-the-box thinking. Communities are redesigning streets and providing opportunities to rebalance the transportation system with new tools such as buffered bicycle lanes, bike boxes, and expanded pedestrian space. There are many examples of these types of changes in large and small cities, and communities should assess which approach is right given their current needs and opportunities. New York City has been a national leader in recent years, pro-

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Above: Allen Pike before bicycle and pedestrian improvements, including colored bike lanes and shortened pedestrian crossings. All are examples of planning and implementation standards that allow greater cyclist and pedestrian access to streets throughout the day (below).



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viding new bike lanes shielded from traffic by parked cars and new pedestrian-only zones in busy areas like Times Square.

Use new development to create walkable, bikeable communities. New investment in communities is an opportunity to improve the pedestrian and bicycle system, and new development may complete missing links in the network. Some communities require new development to provide the basic infrastructure for walking and biking, from mandating wide sidewalks to requiring off-street bike racks and even commuter changing facilities whenever commuter parking is provided. Zoning and subdivision control are powerful tools to improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities over the long term. Two of the most important things a municipality can do for future pedestrians and bicyclists are to: (a) not waive the sidewalk requirement for new subdivisions and (b) require developers to dedicate rights-of-way and build internal and regional bikeway segments on property they control.

Educate the community to make sure people have information about safe routes. Published walking and biking maps; safety outreach, such as helmet fittings; and improved signage are all elements of successful education and outreach programs. Simply making sure people know about routes and other opportunities is one of the best ways to increase biking and walking activity. By improving awareness about biking and walking, communities are able to get people educated and excited about transportation alternatives that already exist. Bike-to-Work Day—originally organized by the League of American Bicyclists over 50 years ago—is typically held on the third Friday in May in communities across the country. Additionally, cities including San Francisco; Tucson, Arizona; Kansas City, Missouri; and Lexington, Kentucky, have created special days (usually summer weekends) where streets are closed to automobile traffic.

Create bike-sharing programs to improve access. Barcelona, Paris, and Montreal are investing in bike-sharing programs and making bikes available for low-cost, short-term rentals through kiosks. American cities including Portland, Oregon; Denver; and Minneapolis have launched or are planning similar programs. The most successful of these programs have been implemented in places where there are already bicycle lanes and other street infrastructure to support safe cycling. The programs have usually been implemented through public-private partnerships, with private entities responsible for maintaining the bikes and rental kiosks.

Partner to create a comprehensive regional network. Many bicycle and pedestrian trips cross jurisdictional boundaries or involve more than one local government. A continuous regional network of bicycle and pedestrian routes will improve the quality for all users. There are good examples of interjurisdictional collaboration for developing bicycle and pedestrian programs, including Capital Bikeshare in Washington, D.C., and Arlington, Virginia. The program launched in September 2010 and will eventually offer 100 stations with over 1,000 bicycles across the two jurisdictions. Local government planning staff can partner with colleagues from transportation and health departments to create a comprehensive strategy.

Evaluate what works to ensure that good decisions and investments in walkable, bikeable communities build on success. Bicycle and pedestrian planning needs to be effective to have a long-term benefit for the community. By evaluating whether policies and investments are having the desired impact, communities can expand what works and change what doesn't to get the solutions that are right for the specific needs and opportunities of the location.

Whether through infrastructure investments or more programmatic approaches, there are some common successful strategies for local governments in creating walkable, bikeable communities. As communities look for more transportation options, there are tools available to increase opportunities for long-range bike and ped planning. International examples of successful techniques and programs, as well as those found in communities across the United States, provide excellent models to be replicated elsewhere.

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2. Other Resources

National Association of City Transportation Officials Best Practices Workshop Presentations. Available at www.nacto.org/workshops.html.

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