

4. BIKES & PEDESTRIANS



In April 2000, the Council of Governments adopted the Capitol Region Bicycle Plan that defined a strategy for making the Region a bike friendly environment that supports bicycling as a viable form of travel. In June of 2001, a Policy for Integrating Bicycling and Walking into the Transportation Infrastructure was adopted; in 2003, a series of Walkability Workshops were held throughout the Region; and in 2005, a Capitol Region Pedestrian Plan was adopted. Each of these items is intended to help the Region realize its goal as defined in the following vision statement.

'That by the Year 2010, residents and visitors of the Region will be able to safely and conveniently walk, bicycle, or take another type of non-motorized vehicle via roads and multi-use trails, to employment centers, shopping areas, bus and train centers, recreation and cultural attractions, and schools. Residential and commercial land use planning and development will incorporate walking and bicycling as legitimate transportation modes, providing people of all ages with efficient and enjoyable transportation options within development clusters and to nearby destinations. It is our intent that such steps will promote a sense of community and friendliness in our communities, while enhancing our appreciation of the natural environment.'

The strategy for achieving this goal is based on the five elements discussed below.

Facilities for Cyclists & Pedestrians

Encouraging more people to cycle and walk is dependent to a large extent on the availability of safe convenient facilities. For cyclists, these include making existing roadways safe for cyclists, providing off-road facilities such as paved bikeways or multi-use trails, and making it possible for cyclists to use the regional bus system as part of a combined bike-bus trip. It also includes making sure there are appropriate facilities available at important destinations for cyclists to store and secure their bikes. For pedestrians, safe and convenient facilities include well maintained sidewalks of adequate width, conveniently located crosswalks, traffic signal systems which are safe and convenient for pedestrians, and multi use trails.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Integrate Biking & Walking into Transportation Infrastructure.** In June 2001, CRCOG adopted a policy on 'Integrating Bicycling and Walking into Transportation Infrastructure.' The intent of the policy is to encourage roadway designers to develop designs that are more accommodating of pedestrians and cyclists. The policy recognizes that the public right-of-way must serve all users – not just motorists; and that if we truly want to achieve more 'livable communities,' roadway designs must accommodate the needs of the community – especially those of pedestrians and cyclists. If these needs are considered early in the design phase of roadway projects, they can be addressed more easily and at a lower cost. While not all conflicts can be resolved in all roadway designs, by making the effort to address pedestrian and cyclists needs, we will succeed in the majority of cases and help create a much more bike and pedestrian friendly environment throughout the Region. The policy closely resembles a national policy adopted by the US Department of Transportation and is very similar to a new nationwide promotion, called Complete Streets. The premise of the Complete Streets movement is that in order for streets to be complete, they must serve pedestrians and bicyclists along with motorists. Key Elements of the CRCOG Policy on Integrating Biking & Walking into Transportation Infrastructure include:

- Bike and pedestrian needs shall be accommodated in new construction and reconstruction projects in all urbanized areas whenever possible and not cost prohibitive. Engineers and

planners are encouraged to consider a full range of treatments to achieve the performance goal of providing safe, convenient, and comfortable travel for bicyclists and pedestrians.

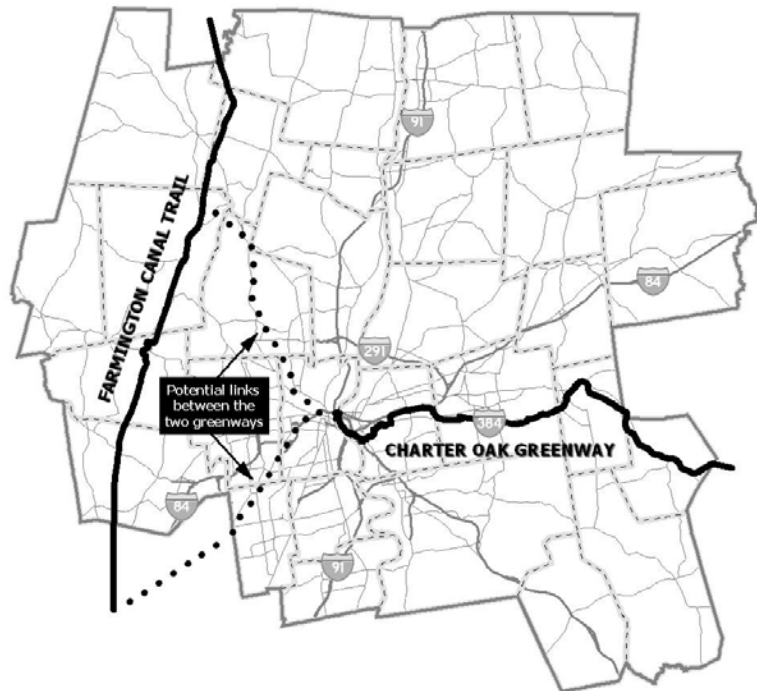
- In rural areas, paved shoulders should be included in all new construction or reconstruction on roadways used by greater than 1000 vehicles per day.
- Sidewalks, shared use paths, street crossings, pedestrian signals, signs, street furniture, transit stops and facilities, and connecting pathways shall be designed, constructed, operated and maintained so that all pedestrians (including those with disabilities) can travel safely and independently.

2. **Regional Greenway System.** The bike plan calls for construction of a regional greenway or multi-use trail system. The primary parts of the regional system include:

Charter Oak Greenway – The Charter Oak Coast Greenway is a proposed trail that will stretch from Hartford to Providence, Rhode Island. In our region, it runs east-west through East Hartford, Manchester, Bolton, and Andover. Segments in Manchester, Bolton, and Andover are already in use. Critical gaps remain in East Hartford, Manchester, and through Bolton Notch.¹ This trail remains a regional priority.

Farmington Canal Trail – The Farmington Canal Trail is a proposed multi-use trail from New Haven, CT to Northampton, MA. In our region, it runs directly north through the Farmington valley through the towns of Farmington, Avon, Simsbury, East Granby, and Suffield. The currently designed sections of this trail are expected to be completed in 2007. Feasibility and design work is required to determine how to complete the trail to the border of Farmington and Plainville. In Plainville (outside of our region), the rail corridor supports an active rail operation and the town of Farmington is waiting to proceed with planning for its section until it is clear that Plainville is moving forward. Completion of this trail remains a high priority.

Major Interregional Greenways



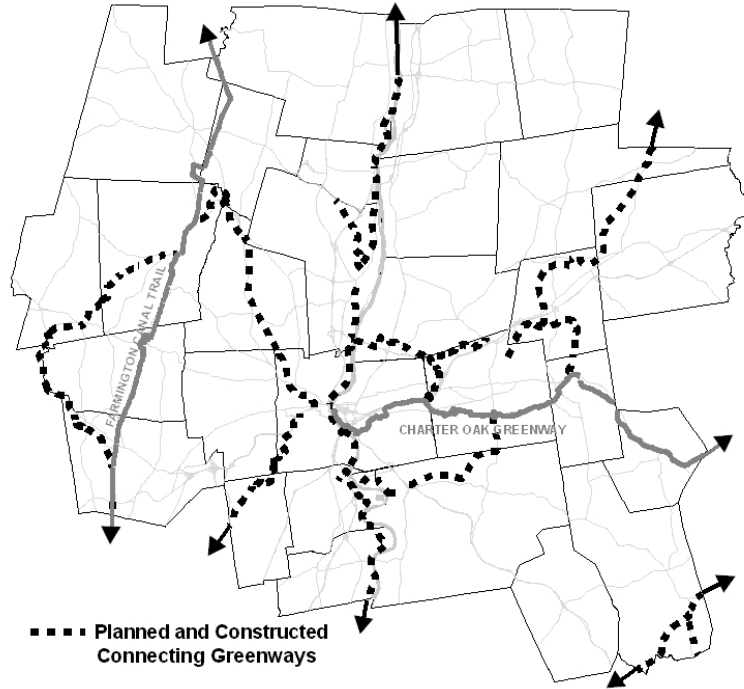
Linking the Two Interregional Greenways. A goal of the Regional Bike Plan is to link the Charter Oak Greenway to the Farmington Canal Trail. Once linked, the two greenways will become part of the even larger network of trails that is known as the East Coast Greenway that will eventually stretch from Maine to Florida. Currently there is no defined route between Hartford and the Farmington Valley. As shown in the Major Interregional Greenways map above, there are at least two potential general alignments that need to be studied. Recently, CROCOG has worked with the towns of Simsbury and Bloomfield and the City of Hartford to develop a concept for linking the trails with a path that follows the corridor of the Griffin rail line (the path might be located outside of the rail right

¹ Bolton Notch is critical because bicycle passage through the Notch is currently prohibited. The only road through the Notch (Route 6) is an expressway and bikes are not allowed.

of way, but in the general rail corridor.) A feasibility study is needed to determine the actual alignment of the path.

Connecting Greenways. The bike plan also supports construction of a secondary set of trails that link to the two primary trails and serve significant sub-areas of the Region. It will be extremely important for the region to continue to build upon the interregional greenways to create a system that can serve all areas of the region. These Connecting Greenways are shown on the map to the right. Some of these are existing facilities, but many are proposed.

Connecting Greenways



3. **Bike Friendly Roadways.** A majority of cycling in the region will continue to take place on the Region's roads and therefore it is very important to work to improve our roadway systems' accommodation of cyclists. Earlier, our research had found that the two strategies that have the greatest impact in improving actual bicycle safety and cyclists perception of safety are wide curb lanes and wide shoulders (4 feet or more). More recently, however, we have learned that bicyclists have a clear preference for wide shoulders or designated bike lanes over wide curb lanes. The bike plan did not identify specific strategies for roadway improvements but set as a priority the identification and improvement of good radial routes for commuter cyclists into and out of Hartford. Already, the City of Hartford has adopted a policy of striping bicycle lanes whenever possible when a road is resurfaced. Adoption of this policy throughout the region will improve bicyclist's safety, and bicyclist's perception of safety, immeasurably.
4. **Bike and Pedestrian Friendly Land Use.** The main areas of concern with regard to bike friendliness of land use are: can a cyclist access a development by bike, and once at the destination, is there a place to securely park a bike? The bike plan recommended a number of actions to encourage developers, towns, and the state to provide more bike racks and other amenities to support bike use. For pedestrians, land use plays a key role in determining if a pedestrian feels comfortable walking. More compact development, a mix of uses, and careful attention to pedestrian needs in land development will play a large role in encouraging more individuals to walk.
5. **Bike Friendly Transit.** Cycling can be feasible for a greater number of individuals if a cycling trip can be combined with a transit trip. To encourage this, the bike plan recommended secure storage for bicycles at transit stops, and special racks on the exterior of buses so cyclists can take their bike with them while they ride the bus.

Safety Education & Enforcement Programs

Both cyclists and pedestrians experience difficulties due to motorist behavior. There is a general lack of knowledge on the part of the average motorist relative to the bicyclist's right to be on the roadway. In addition to lack of knowledge on the part of motorists, many cyclists are unaware of their rights and responsibilities on the road and some law enforcement officials are unsure of what they should expect of cyclists. For pedestrians, the most glaring problem is the failure of motorists to uniformly recognize the need to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks that are not signalized. In fact, Connecticut State Law requires that motorists yield to pedestrians in marked *and unmarked* crosswalks, unless traffic control is present. Overall, bicyclists and pedestrians are frequently not expected, or noticed by motorists.

Enforcement of the rules of the road as they apply to cyclists and pedestrians can have the effect of reinforcing proper behavior. If neither cyclists nor motorists are cited for infractions of these rules, many people remain unaware of when they have operated their bicycle or motor vehicle illegally. Regular enforcement reinforces the rules for the uninformed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Education Programs.** Education programs for both cyclists/pedestrians and motorists are needed. These include school programs for the young cyclist and pedestrian, efforts to reach and inform adult cyclists and pedestrians, and efforts to reach and inform automobile drivers.
2. **Enforcement Programs.** There are a variety of actions that will result in more effective enforcement of motor vehicle laws that affect bicycle and pedestrian safety. These include training for police, and encouragement of police to enforce the laws.
3. **Pedestrian Safety.** A pedestrian safety study completed by CRCOG has revealed a high incidence of pedestrian accidents in urban areas, and especially in Hartford. CRCOG is committed to addressing the problem of pedestrian and cyclist safety in urban areas and identified the following emphasis areas to improve pedestrian safety:
 - Make crossing safer: 80% of pedestrian crashes involve a pedestrian crossing the road.
 - Educate pedestrians: how to legally cross the street, what pedestrian signals mean, etc.
 - Educate motorist and change driver attitudes: yield to pedestrians, watch for pedestrians.
 - Enforcement for both motorists and pedestrians.
 - Improve the physical environment to enhance pedestrian safety: appropriate signal phasing, safe pedestrian ways and crossings.

Promote a Pro-Cycling & Pro-Walking Culture

A critical part of our strategy to increase the use of bicycles and walking for transportation is to promote a culture that will encourage more people to bicycle and to walk. The goal is to build upon the base of current cyclists and walkers, expand the visibility of cycling and walking, and engage new partners (particularly, the business community) to help promote cycling and walking.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Promotional Activities.** In cooperation with towns and the CT Bike Coalition, help plan and sponsor a variety of promotional activities that raise the profile of cycling.
2. **Private Sector.** The bike plan identifies a number of activities to involve the private sector in promoting cycling (example – encouraging employees to bike to work) and in developing bike-related tourist opportunities.
3. **Regional Cycling Map.** Produce a regional cycling map.

4. **Develop a New Planning Ethic** that considers the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians in all projects: planning studies, land use decisions, transportation projects, funding priorities, and locating government facilities.

Planning & Administrative Support

CRCOG needs to continue to provide planning and administrative support to the regional bike and pedestrian program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Staff Support.** CRCOG should continue to provide one staff person on at least a half-time basis to support the bike and pedestrian program.
2. **Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee.** CRCOG should continue to support a standing committee to provide a regional forum to discuss bike issues and to help guide CRCOG's bike and pedestrian planning efforts. Membership has been expanded to assure representation of a broader range of members of the cycling community and those interested in issues of pedestrian safety and access.
3. **Transportation Committee.** CRCOG has appointed a representative of the non-motorized community (the Central CT Bicycle Alliance) to the Transportation Committee.

Funding

In order for the recommendations of the bicycle and pedestrian plans to be accomplished, funding needs to be secured for continued planning and implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Funding for Staff Support.** CRCOG needs to continue to devote a portion of its budget to support a staff person to work on bike and pedestrian planning activities.
2. **Funding for Improvement Programs.** CRCOG needs to work with the Bike and Pedestrian Committee and other agencies to seek and secure funding to implement the bike and pedestrian recommendations.