

Updating the Vision

An aspirational statement of where we want to go...

Identifying or updating a vision is typically the first step in any planning process. The crafters (us!) can outline a dream for that mode, system, or process in writing. For our 2017 Plan Update, we have been working closely with our Steering Committee to identify and update our dream for walking and bicycling in Connecticut.

Yes, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) already has a vision for walking and bicycling in Connecticut. It was crafted in 2008 and adopted in 2009. Eight years later, is that dream still a reflection of what people want? We asked our Steering Committee this very question in our first meeting! We heard that the 2009 vision is fairly accurate, but it could be improved upon. We set out to do that.

We learned that 2009 “vision words” that remain relevant include *convenient, safe, network, connect, accessible for all ages and skills, encourage, promote, and key destinations.*

Additionally, we were told that there were new or missing concepts that should be included. A number of new or missing concepts, such as *improved facilities, maintenance,*

education, funding, and health benefits are discussed elsewhere in the current plan – namely in the Goals and Action Strategies. In instances where these concepts are specific and detail-oriented, the Goals and Action Strategies are likely where they belong.

Other missing concepts, such as Complete Streets and active transportation, were not yet mainstream in Connecticut 2009, and thus were not included in the

plan. Furthermore, the Department was not ready to tackle evaluation and prioritization strategies in a bicycle and pedestrian plan back then.

Rest assured, this 2017 Plan update will indicate which Action Strategies have been implemented. And we heard that the Bicycle Network developed this time must include priority corridors. (More on that in future newsletters!)

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PROGRESSIVE PLACES // Profiles of Connecticut communities that are on the forefront of bicycle and pedestrian planning.

Discovering Torrington, a Little City With Big Ideas

Communities where people have ample opportunities to walk and bike tend to be healthier, happier places to live. Whether a small town or large city, the common denominator is often an impassioned group of citizens leading the way.

Look no further than the City of Torrington, where two key groups are helping the City champion progressive practices. Located in Litchfield County, the former mill town is a community of about 36,000. Torrington is home to an active downtown, a rich arts scene, and a wealth of recreational trails and outdoor amenities throughout rural land.



The Torrington Trails Network is a group of local volunteers who helped bring many of these recreational trails and walkways to fruition. Instrumental to the success of this advocacy group is the strong partnership with the local government, the Torrington YMCA, and historical and cultural institutions.

Another group of local volunteers, the Bike Advocacy Group, is hoping to build off the success of the Torrington Trails Network and will focus on improvements to Torrington's infrastructure, amenities, and policy for bicyclists in town.

To support a useful, connected network beyond City boundaries, both groups strive to capitalize on regional resources. New and improved amenities are aligned with the Open Space and Greenways chapter of the Torrington Plan of Conservation and Development. Regional planning efforts are also factored in.



Common among both groups is the unwavering commitment and camaraderie of the volunteers. Rista Malanca, the Zoning & Wetlands Enforcement Officer, cites them as the best resources to communicate the needs and wishes of the community. It is a mutually beneficial relationship.

The groups also manage tasks, easing staff and commission resources. In turn the Planning and Zoning, Public Works, Street, and Economic Development Departments, provide teeth to the initiatives and technical support. For example, volunteers assisted City staff by leading efforts to write grants to secure funding. Communication early and often is essential.

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Save the Date!

The CT Trails Symposium, presented by the CT Greenways Council, will be held on October 20th in Torrington! Stay tuned for details.

What Will the 2017 Bike Map Be?

What kinds of questions should the 2017 Map answer? What information should it include? Our project team brought these questions to the project's Steering Committee meeting on May 5th. We engaged in a discussion of the possible elements to include, such as loop rides, cross state routes, and suitability. A suitability map and updated trails map will be created as part of this project, but the general consensus was that the 2017 Map should focus on defining a statewide bicycle network.

...but what is a bicycle network?

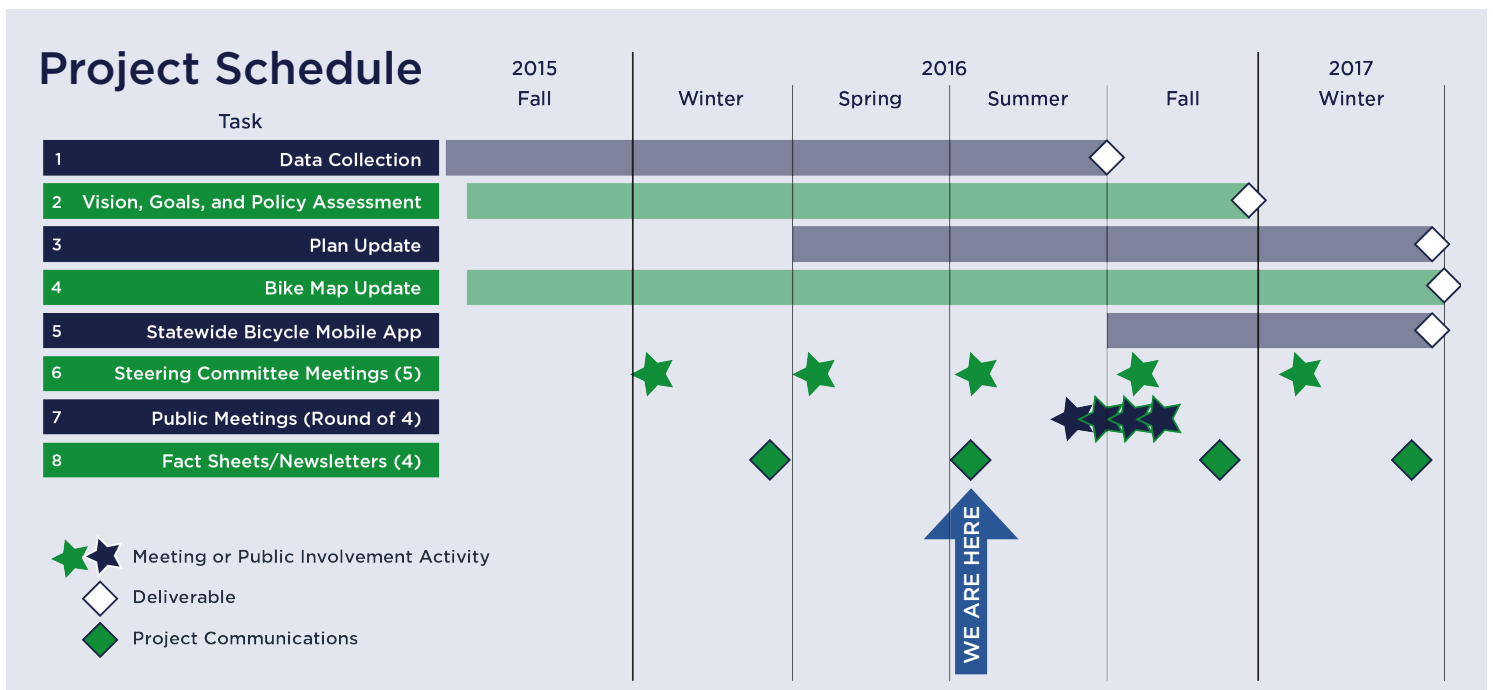
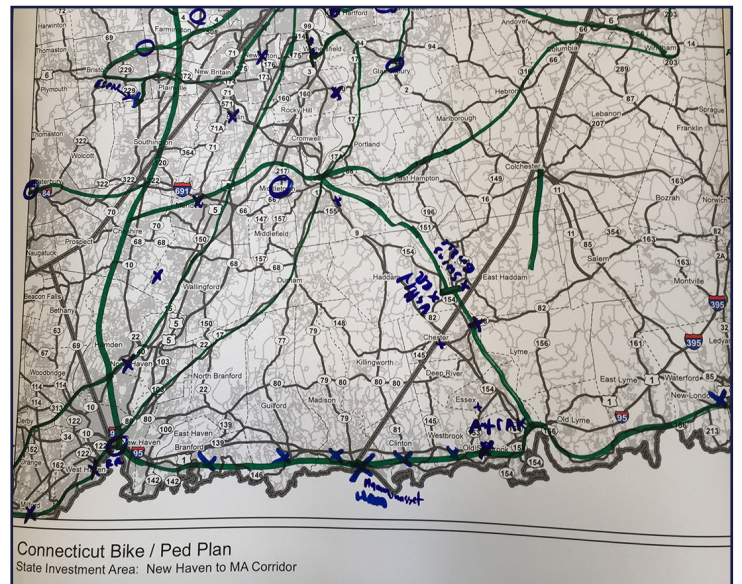
Good question, because there are two distinct types. The first type of network is an aggregate of all existing and planned bicycle facilities. The network would answer such questions as, "What's the best and safest route to bike to work?" or "Where are the best trails for a long bike ride on a Sunday with friends?"

You may have a favorite mapping website or app, like Strava, to answer these inquiries. Those resources are continuously updated, with data gathered from thousands of users, and we can't discount their usefulness.

The second type of bicycle network defines priority corridors and desired connections, irrespective of facility condition. This network is focused on the future, and

answers questions like "Where should the state focus funding investments?", and "What pieces are missing to create a bicycle network that is convenient, safe, and accessible for everyone?" These are the inquiries we are excited to answer! In fact, we are so excited that we got right to work with our Committee. Together, we identified key destinations and critical connections on large maps of the state.

Our project team is working to incorporate the input and data we've received into the development of a draft Priority Corridor Bicycle Network. Please stay tuned!



Updating the Vision, continued



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And, in some cases, some of these suggested aspirations merit more discussion in the plan chapters. For example, it may be appropriate to outline the merits of walking and bicycling. This section could be a good place to discuss the traffic, environmental, economic, and health benefits of walking and bicycling.

Finally, after discussing a revised vision at Steering Committee Meeting #2 in May, a guiding principal is to keep the Vision short and simple, and include the nitty-gritty details in the Goals and Action Strategies. A clear Mission Statement would add value, outlining the *what and why* of the Vision statement.

With help from the Steering Committee, below is a draft Vision of where we think we want to go:

Draft Vision

The **State of Connecticut** will encourage, promote and **continue to improve the conditions** of bicycling, walking, and other forms of active transportation, so that any person, **regardless of age, ability, or income** will be able to walk, bicycle, or use other types of active transportation modes safely and conveniently throughout the State of Connecticut.

An **integrated** network of on-road facilities and multi-use trails will connect **key destinations, municipalities, and regions**, while strengthening Connecticut's links to neighboring states.

In response to our Steering Committee's suggestion to identify the *what and why* of the Vision, a draft Mission Statement was created:

Draft

Mission Statement

The Connecticut Department of Transportation believes that walking and bicycling promote healthy lives, strong communities, and more sustainable environments.

What do you think of these working drafts? Please email your thoughts to Marcy Miller at mmiller@fhiplan.com, or submit your comments via the website!

Get Involved!



Visit CTBikePedPlan.org to learn more, share your ideas, insights, and concerns, and provide feedback.

Read the newsletter, and impress friends with your knowledge of the Plan Update. (Share with them, too!)



Let others know about this planning effort. Everyone from the novice to the expert are invited to participate!

Join our email list to stay informed. We promise not to flood your inbox!



Stay tuned for a series of public meetings this fall, held throughout the state.