

## 5.4 BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the RVMPO's bicycle and pedestrian modes of transportation. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are both integrated, that is, sharing the street system with motorized traffic, and separate, using dedicated rights-of-way. On urban streets, pedestrians and cyclists are separated, with the former being required to use sidewalks, and the latter being provided where possible with bike lanes alongside motorized traffic. The place for skateboards and other fast human-powered vehicles such as inline skates tends to be ambiguous and will need addressing more fully as these activities grow. These modes (skateboarders and in-line skates) are often allowed to be on the surface streets in restricted areas such as downtowns, although they are not considered safe with medium to high-speed traffic. Otherwise, they are allowed to use sidewalks.

The value of non-motorized alternatives is discussed, along with results to date in improving the Rogue Valley non-motorized transportation system. Lastly, the chapter discusses how bicycle and pedestrian needs and amenities can be linked to the fixed transit system to increase use, since cycling and walking are the primary ways that customers access transit.

### REGIONAL TRAVEL BEHAVIOR

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) research has estimated that a bicycle trip is reasonable for the commuter if within 3 miles; and a pedestrian trip, if it is to be attractive, to be within a mile assuming adequate facilities are available for the entire length of the trip. Further distinctions between non-motorized modes are difficult.

Walking currently accounts for about 7 percent of the home-based and non-home based trips in the metropolitan area. This upgrade of pedestrian facilities is planned to help continue to raise the mode share trips. The upgrading of pedestrian facilities will include the infill of missing sidewalk links, and changes in subdivision layout, providing for non-roadway pedestrian links between subdivisions and neighborhood commercial areas and schools.

The RTP recommends development of integrated bicycle and pedestrian networks to make it more convenient for people to bike and walk. The bicycle and pedestrian system depicted here is aimed at increasing the

#### **Benefits of Bicycle and Pedestrian Use**

Health benefits aside, there are important contributions that pedestrians and bicycle facilities and the people who use them make to the transportation system, including:

- Relieving congestion;
- Improving air quality;
- Providing a transportation choice for those who cannot afford a car or cannot drive; and
- Providing access to/from the bus to origins/destinations.

“mode share” that is, the slice of the total travel pie, being handled by non-motorized modes of travel. Journey-to-work trips are particularly important because many occur during times of peak traffic during the morning and afternoons, although work trips account for only about one of five trips in the region.



People may make decisions based on their environment or community. Home, work, school and community can provide either barriers to or opportunities for an active lifestyle. For example, a person may choose not to walk to the store or work because of a lack of sidewalks. When new sidewalks go in that are well-connected at each end, walking increases. Communities, homes, and workplaces each shape health decisions. With fewer options for physical activity and healthy eating, it becomes more difficult for people to make good choices. A result is increasing incidence of obesity and diabetes. Promoting healthy lifestyles to prevent obesity in a community involves the creation of a healthy environment. A role for transportation is to provide safe, easy, affordable access to destinations. Planning for “active transportation” has taken on a prominent role in state as well as regional planning. Jackson County has developed an Active Transportation Plan for the RVMPO area which was adopted in April of 2021. A link to the document is available on the MPO’s website and is provided below:

<https://rvmpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Final-Active-Transportation-Plan-040921-1.pdf>

## BICYCLE FACILITIES

The region’s bicycle system reflects a two-pronged approach. First are integrated bicycle systems. Second are stand-alone dedicated bike-and-pedestrian ways, most notably the Bear Creek Greenway; and more recently the Rogue River Greenway, planned to connect the existing Bear Creek Greenway near Central Point to the City of Rogue River. Ultimately, the Rogue River Greenway is to connect to Grants Pass.

**Integrated Bikelanes** – Communities have been actively striping bike lanes on existing streets that are wide enough to accommodate them, and inclusion of bike lanes on arterial and collector streets is required under Oregon law as indicated in the Transportation Planning Rule (TPR).

All streets in the metropolitan area should be designed to accommodate bicyclists safely. A bikeway network that provides a higher level of service for bicyclists should be implemented along major travel corridors to encourage bicycle use. The RTP includes projects along collector and arterial streets within the RVMPO boundaries. Consistent with the TPR, the RVMPO's policy is for these facilities to include bicycle lanes or, in rural areas, shoulders with a width greater than four feet. The RVMPO, as part of the Alternative Measures (See Appendix B) has tracked the progress of including these facilities on the RVMPO's street network. An inventory conducted in 2014 shows that the 54% of the RVMPO area's collector and arterial roadways have bike facilities.

Bicycle improvements may also include roadway widening to accommodate on-street bike lanes, or some locations where parking or travel lanes are changed to bike lanes. Bicycle parking is particularly important if bicycling is to become a viable mode of transportation and carry the expected percentage of trips specified in the plan. Bicycle parking needs include short-term parking for customers or visitors and all-day parking for employees or students. Bicycle parking requirements can be specified in the municipal code as a percentage of automobile parking. For some uses, relatively little bicycle parking needs to be provided, but it is rarely justified to have no bicycle parking at all. The code can also specify locations that make parking areas safe, convenient, and secure. For example, it is preferable for bicycle parking to be located in high-visibility areas near often-used public entrances of buildings.

**Separate Facilities** – Separate bicycle and pedestrian facilities have the merit of providing a quieter, cleaner, safer and more rural atmosphere for users. The Bear Creek Greenway within the RVMPO, provides a link between Ashland and Central Point, with good and frequent connections to local streets, means that both short-distance and long-distance users can benefit from a true alternative to sharing the highway and street system for much of their activity.

Greenways provide natural routes for multi-use paths. Because they often follow creek drainages, the potential exists to connect paths with the greenway path system. These paths provide an alternative to bicycle and pedestrian systems associated with the street system.



**Bear Creek Greenway Multi-Use Path**

Some bicycle commuters have said they do not use some sections of the Greenway due to the need to travel at slow speeds to address safety concerns while sharing the path with those traveling at lower speeds. These commuters generally travel on surface streets, particularly Hwy 99, which currently does not have a complete system of bicycle lanes.

The need should be further explored for bicycle lanes along the Hwy 99 corridor, east-west greenways, and surface street routes that connect to the Bear Creek Greenway. Until these facilities exist, commuting by bicycle will remain at levels that some cyclists feel are insufficient.

## FACILITY OPERATIONS

Provision of the basic infrastructure is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition, of enthusiastic and growing non-motorized vehicle use. Good design and provision of amenities such as restrooms are important. However, equally important is good operation of the system. Users have complained that a lack of a sense of security was the greatest deterrent to greater Greenway use. Safe operations also require that pavement be kept in good repair and free of bulging root systems (a common problem in some sections) or potholes, since slender bicycle tires are much more at risk for catching a hole or obstruction and causing a spill than are wider automotive tires encountering similar obstacles on the highway. Surface street operations also need to be enhanced.

## PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

The Oregon Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) requires sidewalks along all collector and arterial streets within an urban growth boundary. Streets and public spaces can be designed to promote pedestrian use, with important pedestrian-friendly amenities including street trees, park strips, on-street parking, adequate unobstructed sidewalk width pedestrian-scale lighting, and locating buildings near the street. Enhanced crosswalk facilities such as islands, medians and lighting beacons can also improve the pedestrian's safety.

**Sidewalk System Continuity** – Most local governments already require new developments to include sidewalks and walkways. Where such provisions are not required, this requirement should be adopted. Sidewalks are also generally provided with most major street improvement projects. One issue, which should be made a priority, is to develop a systematic approach to filling gaps in the sidewalk system. To accomplish this, an annual allocation for construction is recommended. The highest priority for sidewalk construction should be given to locations near schools, public facilities, and heavily used transit corridors. Safety should be a prime consideration in evaluation and design.

**Transit-Related Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues** – The provision of sidewalks is vitally important to transit, too. Pedestrian access to transit stops can be the

determining factor as to whether or not an individual chooses a trip via transit or automobile.

Current efforts at providing both pedestrian and bicyclist access to transit could be significantly expanded by providing better walkways to commercial centers and providing walkways from subdivisions to bus stops on arterials. Providing bicycle racks and lockers at transit stations, and bicycle racks on buses are strategies to encourage and promote the use of bicycles and transit for commuting.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** - People with disabilities may use crutches or wheelchairs, use a walker, or have no visible sign of disability but suffer from heart disease, emphysema or other illness that limits how far and how easily they can walk. The ADA requires attention to the special mobility needs of this population. At the same time, pedestrians are the most physically vulnerable users of the transportation system, and safety is a significant issue in making the system accessible to these modes.

## SAFETY

The maintenance of bike paths can have a significant impact on bicycle safety as previously noted. Another major issue for bicycle safety is motorists and cyclists not following the rules of the road. A common driver error is failing to yield to bicycles. Bicyclists riding the wrong way (against the traffic) are the leading cause of crashes in which the cyclist is at fault because it makes them less visible to drivers.

**Traffic Calming Application: Center Island**



While only 15 to 35 percent of bicycle crashes involve motor vehicles, most pedestrian crashes are collisions with cars. Most vehicle/pedestrian crashes occur as pedestrians are attempting to cross roadways. Speed is an important factor in the severity of car and pedestrian crashes. Reduced traffic speeds prevent pedestrian deaths. One method for reducing traffic speeds and thereby increasing bicycle and pedestrian safety is traffic calming. Methods of traffic calming include street redesign techniques to allow safer pedestrian and cycling activity and slow down the flow of traffic. Such measures include: pedestrian bulb-outs, center islands, chicanes, speed humps, and narrow traffic lanes.



In addition, bike and pedestrian safety can influence planning for other modes. For instance, enhancing bicycle and pedestrian facilities around schools could reduce the number of motor vehicle trips.

**Traffic Calming Application: Sidewalk Bulb-out**

## FUNDING FOR BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PROJECTS

RVMPPO Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds and ODOT's Enhance-It program are important sources of funding for bike/pedestrian projects in the region including the Bear Creek Greenway and, more recently, the beginning stages of the Rogue River Greenway. Additionally, state and local funds are used to add sidewalks and bike lanes to existing streets. These projects can be significant not only for the added blocks and miles of facilities, but because they fill gaps in the network and contribute to creating uninterrupted, safe routes for pedestrians and bicyclists.