



SOLANO COUNTYWIDE PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Active Transportation through Walking | 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Preface

Active Transportation through Walking

A key factor in pedestrian-friendly communities throughout the country and world is the mutual respect between motorists and people on foot. While Solano County prides itself on having smaller sized livable communities, there are many opportunities to improve the education and understanding between all users of the road. Public comments that were received through the development of this Plan noted a lack of respect between motorists and pedestrians. A common concern noted in one public forum was how few people stop their cars at crosswalks to allow people—even children—to cross. Conversely, it is not uncommon to see pedestrians unaware of their surroundings walking into the crosswalk without looking or crossing against the signal, which can be frustrating activities for motorists.

At times, planning and street design can play a prominent role in the opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians to safely travel from place to place within their communities of residence or as guests. Complete Streets Policies provide guidance and direction to Planning and Public Works departments throughout California and the Northern California Region have been developed in recent years. These policies have been an essential addition to the stewardship of accommodating pedestrian and bicycle travel. Complete Streets policies provide required guidelines for planning and implementation of street design with a specialized

emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle transportation, which can be referenced in Chapter 4.

This Plan calls for a new era of mutual awareness and understanding between all people using public right-of-ways. It calls on pedestrians and bicyclists to police themselves and spread the word on the importance of obeying the rules-of-the-road. The Plan identifies several strategies to educate the general public on the rights of pedestrians and on the importance of sharing the road and deferring to pedestrians when needed. With education of the public as well as the improved requirements for planning and design, the Plan aims to improve the link between this level of respect and the overall quality of life in Solano County for everyone.





Executive Summary

Purpose

The Solano Countywide Pedestrian Transportation Plan (hereafter referred to as “the Plan” or “the Pedestrian Plan” or “the Plan”) is the Solano Transportation Authority’s (STA) reference document for planning and supporting pedestrian system improvements and investments in seven cities (Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, & Vallejo) and the County of Solano. It serves as a guide to planning and engineering professionals in Solano County’s jurisdictions. The Plan is also meant to serve as a platform that interested members of the public can utilize to engage their city’s planning and public works staff and local City Councils for the betterment of the community in which they live.

The main purpose of the Solano Countywide Pedestrian Plan is to encourage the development of a unified regional pedestrian system throughout Solano County. The system consists of physical walking routes, wayfinding signage, and associated amenities such as benches/rest areas, downtowns, grocery stores, activity centers, etc. The Plan focuses on a pedestrian system that will provide origin and destination connections in Solano County as well as to surrounding counties. Additionally, it contains policies that are designed to support and encourage pedestrian transportation, design standards for use in implementation efforts, and promotional strategies. This Plan strives to identify regional pedestrian facilities that are consistent with the local facilities planned in each of the STA’s member agency’s jurisdictions, and regional facilities in neighboring counties.

As a component of the Solano Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), the Plan has a long-range overall planning horizon to the year 2040. Each member jurisdiction of the STA is encouraged to incorporate the Plan’s recommendations into their local planning policies and road standards. The STA, with the Plan as the basis, will help local agencies seek various funding sources (as suggested in the Plan)

to implement the projects at the local level. It is expected that through individual and combined efforts that many of the proposed projects contained within this Plan will be implemented over time.

Pedestrian Plan Purpose Statement:

“To facilitate and provide safe and efficient pedestrian travelling as an everyday means of transportation in Solano County”

History

The Countywide Pedestrian Plan began in 2002 as part of a joint effort with the County of Solano to inventory and prioritize trails and pathways throughout Solano County. At the time, the County was considering options for a regional Parks District. In partnership with the County of Solano, the STA created the Trails Advisory Committee to assist in developing a Countywide Trails Plan was to provide a comprehensive and unified plan for trail connections between communities, major parks, open space resource areas, and pedestrian-oriented zones and destinations. The 2002 Solano Countywide Trails Plan identified a total of 216





miles of combined existing and planned trail paths in the cities and unincorporated Solano County areas. This included regional trail segments that are part of the San Francisco Bay Area Ridge Trail and the Association of Bay Area Governments' Bay Area Bay Trail.

The STA Board replaced the Solano Countywide Trails Plan by adopting the Solano Countywide Pedestrian Plan in 2004. The primary difference between the both plans is that the 2004 Countywide Pedestrian Plan included a stronger link to pedestrian-oriented development and other smart growth concepts associated with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC's) Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) Program. By this time, the STA's Trails Advisory Committee membership grew and evolved into today's Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC). The STA's PAC has a greater emphasis on pedestrian connections within cities rather than on trails in the unincorporated area. The 2012 Countywide Pedestrian Transportation Plan is an update to the 2004 Plan.



Problem Statement

Safety, access, quality of life, and effective implementation are imperative elements for a complete transportation system and Solano County's success as a pedestrian-friendly county.

Safety

Safety is the number one concern of citizens, whether they are avid or casual recreational hikers/walkers or commuters who get to work by walking for all or part of their trip. A consistent pedestrian network with sidewalks and paths is a large existing component in Solano County. However, complete connections from these paths to activity/transit centers as well as wayfinding signing is generally lacking in the county. In some instances design decisions may have been made to increase vehicular traffic and/or parking capacity and speeds at the expense of pedestrians and bicyclists. The Plan intends to help reduce the accident and fatality rate for pedestrians through design standards and guidelines, education, and enforcement.

Access

Access for pedestrians to recreation, school, shopping, work, and other destinations is hampered in some instances by the long distances between major destinations. In others, the barriers posed by the numerous highway corridors in the county (such as SR 12, SR 37, I-80, I-505, I-780, and I-680) present pedestrians with problems, as facilities are fragmented by numerous and difficult interchange crossings. Facilities and services are a part of accessibility, demand, and increased use of walking as a means of travel around the county. Factoring in the potential for children walking to school, walking-to-transit trips, and other utilitarian trips, Solano County has the potential to increase the walking mode share significantly by 2040.



Quality of Life

This plan urges the STA and its member jurisdictions to take measurable steps toward the goal of improving every citizen's quality of life; improving public health; creating a more sustainable environment; and, reducing traffic congestion, vehicle exhaust emissions, noise, and energy consumption. The importance of developing a pedestrian system that is attractive and inviting is a key element in preserving Solano County as a place where people want to live, work, and visit. This is increasingly important as Solano County builds new housing, businesses, and roads. The attractiveness of the environment not only invites pedestrians to explore Solano County's activity/employment centers, beautiful rural scenery, hills, and waterways, but more importantly, a beautiful environment helps to enhance everyone's positive feelings about the quality of life in Solano County.

Effective Implementation

Education, enforcement, engineering, and funding are the basic components of an effective implementation program for this Pedestrian Plan. Education must be targeted towards pedestrians as well as to motorists regarding the rights and responsibilities of the pedestrian and automobile driver. Comprehensive enforcement of existing traffic and parking laws, coupled with the implementation of sound design and engineering principles for pedestrian corridors, is also critical. This plan also encourages systematic review by STA member agency staff and the PAC of all new development projects, including public works efforts, to assure compliance with planning and building codes and the principles of this Pedestrian Plan. Finally, this plan proposes an aggressive strategy for obtaining grants and competing for funding sources to realize the physical improvements identified as the highest priorities. This Plan intends to equip the STA and its members to successfully compete for state and federal funding by meeting the requirements of Complete Streets Policies (see Chapter 4),

Federal Transportation Bill funding, and future state and federal funding sources.

The Countywide Pedestrian Plan is intended to directly benefit local agencies by:

- Providing more attention to needs and opportunities to support walking as a means of transportation and as an integral part of community character;
- Supporting current city pedestrian plans and projects and providing a framework for creating more detailed city pedestrian plans;
- Sharing information on planning and implementing successful projects;
- Encouraging better consistency and coordination between communities on pedestrian accommodations and pedestrian-oriented projects;
- Providing a means for local citizens and groups to understand pedestrian plans and opportunities and make suggestions, providing resources for planning and describing projects, and identifying and preparing grant applications to support implementation;
- Prioritizing and coordinating countywide projects for a better overall result and greater success in competing against other regions for project funding.



Downtown Benicia



Local Adoption Procedure

Caltrans has not developed a standard policy about how County Pedestrian Plans can be used by local jurisdictions to meet state and federal grant requirements. However, the Caltrans Bicycle Facilities Unit (BFU) has been fairly consistent in their approach to this matter. Based on the Caltrans BFU requirements to qualify for BTA funding, STA suggests three Pedestrian Plan options for a local agency (including a county, town, or city) to qualify for general funding opportunities:

1. An agency can complete its own local plan
2. Use the County Plan provided to each agency to create a local Pedestrian Master Plan
3. Adopt the County Plan with specific caveats and additional information to make it relevant to that community (Caltrans supports this position as it relates to using County Plans for cities and towns)

How to Use the Pedestrian Plan

This plan is a guide to anyone interested in improving local transportation and air quality standards in their community. It is important to note that each city and the County can adopt this Plan and meet the state and federal requirements for grant funding sources to develop the projects contained within. However, each jurisdiction can also develop and approve its own pedestrian plan, or use some portion of this Plan to do so. This Plan has incorporated existing local plans and priorities as part of its recommendations to eliminate that need. Local projects not specifically included in this Plan can be adopted and funded by each community as well.

For the STA Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) and members of the public, it is essential to note that each person can contact their local pedestrian planning staff to make comments or provide suggestions. Please contact STA staff with any comments and to obtain the current contact information for the pedestrian facilities coordinator in your city.





Major Recommendations of the Pedestrian Plan Update

The Plan recommends the completion of a comprehensive pedestrian network and support facilities, along with new educational and promotional programs to improve conditions for pedestrians in Solano County. The pedestrian system calls for the implementation of projects at an estimated cost of approximately \$78 million over the next 25 years. The primary projects identified for implementation in the short term (the next five years) include:

- Dixon West B Street Bicycle-Pedestrian Undercrossing – a critical safety improvement and multi-modal connection to a future train station
- Vallejo Downtown Streetscape Improvements
- Wayfinding Signage

Overview of Plan Contents

The Solano Countywide Pedestrian Plan highlights the priority projects and process to develop the County's network for seven cities and the County (Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, Vallejo) and Solano County.

Chapter 1 – Existing Conditions

Chapter 1 is a review of the physical, social, economic, and environmental benefits of walking, and the opportunities presented by current federal and state policies and funding programs.

Chapter 2 – Purpose Statement, Goals, and Objectives

Included in this Chapter are the STA's goals and objectives for the Countywide Pedestrian Plan and the planning process to meet these goals.

Chapter 3 – Proposed Countywide Pedestrian System

Chapter 3 lists the Countywide Priority Pedestrian Projects that are relevant to each jurisdiction in Solano County. The chapter provides a financially constrained list of priority projects that can be funded and constructed within the next 5-10 years as well as a list of longer-term projects that will take beyond 10 years to implement.

Chapter 4 – Policies and Programs

This Chapter provides references for regional policies such as Complete Streets and safety programs such as Safe Routes to School (SR2S) and Safe Routes to Transit (SR2T).

Chapter 5 – Cost Analysis and Implementation Strategy

This Chapter outlines the estimated costs for the projects identified in the plan and recommendations for efficient implementation of these projects. It also includes federal, state, and local sources for pedestrian facilities funding. A matrix summarizing funding sources is provided at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 6 – Data Collection

This chapter provides an overview of sample methodology for pedestrian counts as well as commuter transportation data.