

X. NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

A. BACKGROUND

In 1994, the Skagit County Public Works Department developed a non-motorized transportation study and draft non-motorized transportation plan. That study produced a draft version of the NMTP. After the 1994 document was developed, it was determined that it should be modified to more fully include the interests of the cities, for the purpose of allowing the document to be adopted as the non-motorized Transportation Element of the Regional Transportation Plan, as well as an element of the County Comprehensive Plan.

The Skagit County Comprehensive Plan Transportation Systems Element (1997) established the framework for the development of non-motorized transportation plans policies and programs. The development of specific plans and policies were delegated to the development of a specific non-motorized transportation plan.

The Skagit County Non-motorized Transportation Plan (NMTP) is an element of the Transportation Systems Plan, and addresses issues relating to bicycle and pedestrian transportation issues in Skagit County. The NMTP provides no specific project proposals for the County Transportation Improvement Program. Rather, it identifies policies and strategies for improving the safety, access and mobility of non-motorized transportation system users in unincorporated Skagit County.

The policies of the NMTP also formed the basis for the adopted Skagit County Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) Non-motorized Transportation Plan. The consistency between these two plans is intended to form a framework for more aggressive and coordinated efforts to improve the ability of the local, county and state transportation systems to accommodate growing numbers of citizens and visitors who use bicycles and walking to move about the County.

1. Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on non-motorized travel alternatives for Skagit County. It provides a basis for the non-motorized section of the Sub-Regional Transportation Plan and is a key component of the transportation element of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan. Non-motorized elements are essential elements in the development of adopted programs and funding for a variety of public facilities, including Federal funding support for sidewalks, access to transit activities, trails and road improvement projects. Facilities and issues that involve travel by bicycle, on foot, and to a lesser extent on horseback are addressed and a number of key recommendations are made. The overall long-term goal is to achieve a safe, convenient, cost-efficient and countywide non-motorized transportation system. Specifically, development and adoption of the Non-motorized Transportation Plan meets policy and legislation direction from the Washington Growth Management Act

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and the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan, and is consistent with policies adopted by the Skagit Subregional Transportation Planning Organization and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

2. What is the difference between a Non-motorized Transportation Plan and a Trails Plan?

Non-motorized transportation plans are intended to shape policies, programs and projects that enable members of the public who travel on foot or by bike to reach their destinations safely and efficiently. Usually, these plans have addressed both on-street accommodations (where most non-motorized travel occurs) and trails, which are increasingly popular facilities for both recreational and transportation use in a variety of settings

In the thirty years since non-motorized transportation plans first came into significant use in this country, there has been developed a wide variety of public, private and educationally developed plans and programs which were designed to address the bicycle and pedestrian “needs” of the community. Many times these transportation plans focused almost exclusively on trails and other separated facilities, or resulted in bike maps that told a user where it is either safe or preferred that they ride.

To a degree, it is easy to understand why so many plans focus on trails. Trails are very visible, and in the long haul become very popular facilities with the general public. They are easily promoted, and properly designed and developed can result in many trips being taken by bike or foot which previously would have required a car trip, even for short distances.

The passage by Congress of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991, and its successor Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998 established a broader range of goals for non-motorized transportation planning and program development. In both ISTEA and TEA-21, the role of bicyclists and pedestrians as a vital part of an overall transportation development strategy is recognized and promoted. Rather than simply promoting the development of new places for the public to ride bikes, the planning mandates of TEA-21 specifically call for the integration of walking and bicycling in the overall system of transportation facilities and programs, including roads, transit, land use, safety and enforcement efforts.

Trails, properly located and designed, can do much to encourage the use of walking and bicycling in a community. They cannot, however, be expected to provide the same level of access to the same number of destinations as is provided by the existing roads and highways in that community. Ultimately, it needs to be recognized that pedestrians and bicyclists are legitimate transportation modes, and that most actions taken to design, develop and maintain our transportation system must account for the needs of these users as we account for the needs of other

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recognized users. How this is accomplished will vary depending on the type of area (rural or urban), type of facility (arterial or country lane) and the users expected (adults with extensive cycling experience, casual bicyclists, or schoolchildren).

3. Is this really a recreation plan?

As is described in the next section, Skagit County, through its Comprehensive Plan, established that the transportation functions of the County include supporting recreation travel, by whatever mode. This is certainly understandable given the significant role that tourism plays in the economy of Skagit County. One of the unique characteristics of non-motorized travel is that many people find a trip taken on foot or on bike to be inherently enjoyable, and many will combine purposes for these trips. As with motorized vehicles, planning and design of facilities is dependant upon the needs and characteristic of the mode of travel, and not upon the purpose for which the trip is taken.

Transportation funding programs (such as STP Enhancement) require that the proposed project serve a transportation function, and that the design of the facility serve these purposes (i.e. all trails must be paved). Not all of the projects identified in the Parks and Recreation Plan can be expected to meet such a test.

The NMTP incorporates findings and policies from the Parks plan, but language is presented to assist in determining the relative transportation value of a given trails or parks project. This becomes vitally important when these trails and/or parks projects seek state and federal transportation dollars to support facility development.

In addition, all public on-street facilities are by definition a part of the transportation system, and must meet design criteria established for transportation purposes, whether or not the particular facility is also listed in the Parks plan.

The Skagit County NMTP is a function of the Transportation Element of the County Comprehensive Plan. That same Comprehensive Plan calls for the development of the Parks and Trails Plan. ***This document does not amend or in any way supercede the adoption in 1997 of the Trails Plan.*** This document does describe the relationship of trails projects to transportation funding sources, and also describes when a trail facility can also be considered as an element of the transportation network relative to other proposed or existing projects.

B. INTRODUCTION

1. Why Plan for Non-motorized Transportation?

Non-motorized transportation has historically played a significant role in the day-to-day activities and the ongoing development of urban and rural communities in the Pacific Northwest. Skagit County is no exception.

In rural areas, bicycle and equestrian travel take on greater importance as the demand for longer-distance facilities, and safe shoulders and highway crossings increases. Travel to, from and within rural areas often involves greater distances and higher traffic speeds than in urban areas. Thus, the needs for non-motorized transportation are somewhat different between the two areas. Trip purposes and destinations also vary.

2. Bicycle Travel

The bicycle is one of the most efficient transportation modes. As such, it provides people with the opportunity to cover much greater distances than can be achieved on foot in the same amount of time. A leisurely walk averages around two miles per hour, or three miles per hour for a brisk walk. An experienced cyclist, on the other hand, can cover ten to twenty miles in an hour on flat terrain. Even with hills, traffic and a leisurely pace, cycling is usually much quicker than walking.

For many people, the *time* it takes to reach a destination is more important than the *speed* at which we can travel. This partially explains why walking as a mode of transportation falls off rapidly beyond a one or two mile threshold. The time it takes to drive two miles in light traffic is insignificant compared to the hour it may take to walk there. The bicycle, however, can compete well with the automobile on many of these shorter trips, assuming adequate facilities are available. For example, a two-mile bike ride under the best of circumstances may take only ten minutes, an acceptable commute for many of us.

For planning purposes, bicyclists are often described as a mix of three different types of riders:

- Children & inexperienced riders
- Casual adult riders
- Experienced riders

The entire road system - built to help people travel to and from a vast number of destinations - can better serve similar travel needs of cyclists. This does not mean that bikelanes must be added to all roads in order to accommodate cyclists. Non-designated bike routes, often consisting of little more than a modestly paved

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road shoulder or a widened outside lane can function nearly as well as designated bikelanes or bike paths in the development of a regional transportation system.

3. Pedestrian Travel

The role of pedestrian travel in fulfilling people's day-to-day transportation needs in the U.S. has been studied extensively by state and federal transportation agencies and by researchers in recent years. Although the numbers vary in specific locales, the tendency toward shorter trips nationally is clear. Walking nationally accounts for nearly 40% of all trips made under a half-mile in length.

Presently, few pedestrian transportation facilities other than road shoulders and unofficial user paths exist in rural Skagit County. Several major projects for non-motorized users are currently in the planning or design stages in several locations around the County.

A 1993 survey of Skagit County citizens found that a significant demand exists for pedestrian facilities for both recreational and transportation purposes. Trails and bikeways were consistently rated at or near the top of the list of facilities that the public felt are needed most.

Pedestrian facility improvements should be seen in the context of improving the performance of existing community areas and systems. Most notably, the relationship of transit systems and the ability of patrons to safely access that system by foot is being seen nation-wide as an area where greater cooperation between transit agencies and roads managers can result in better use of transit resources. Commercial areas which are walkable are generally more active and vital, while the need to coordinate the location of schools with well-designed pedestrian facilities becomes more important as the cost of providing bus transportation grows.

4. Benefits of Bicycling & Walking: Transportation Benefits

Many of the trips that Americans make every day are short enough to be accomplished on a bicycle, on foot or via wheelchair. The 1995 National Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS) found that approximately 40% of all trips are less than 2 miles in length – which represents a 10-minute bike ride or a 30-minute walk. In fact, a 1995 Rodale Press survey found that Americans want the opportunity to walk or bike instead of drive: 40% of U.S. adults say they would commute by bike if safe facilities were available. While most of the roads administered by Skagit County are rural, growth near existing towns and cities are bringing an increasing number of people in unincorporated county areas within a reasonable bicycling distance of urban areas and destinations.

Bicycling and walking can help to reduce roadway congestion, particularly in urban or growing areas. Bicycling and walking require less space per traveler than automobiles. Just as significant, roadway improvements to accommodate

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pedestrians and bicycles can also enhance safety for motorists. For example, adding paved shoulders on two-lane roads has been shown to reduce the frequency of run-off-road, head-on, and sideswipe motor vehicle crashes.

5. Benefits of Bicycling & Walking: Economic Benefits

Bicycling and walking are affordable forms of transportation. When safe facilities are provided for pedestrians and bicyclists, more people are able to be productive, active members of society. Car ownership is expensive, and consumes a major portion of many Americans' income.

6. Benefits of Bicycling & Walking: Environmental Benefits

Motor vehicles create a substantial amount of air pollution. In fact, transportation is responsible for nearly 80 percent of carbon monoxide and 50 percent of nitrogen oxide emissions in the U.S. Not surprisingly, many metropolitan areas do not meet the air quality standards specified in the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments.

7. Benefits of Bicycling & Walking: Quality of Life Benefits

Better conditions for bicycling and walking have intangible benefits to the quality of life in cities and towns. In a growing number of communities, bicycling and walking are considered as indicators of a community's livability – a factor that has a profound impact on attracting businesses and workers as well as tourism. The development of new communities by the private sector in recent years has increasingly reflected these values, and incorporated walkways, trails and other amenities designed to increase the ability of residents to walk or cycle .

The recreation benefits of bicycling and walking are clear - according to the Report of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors (1990), nearly 90 percent of Americans age 12 and older go outdoors for recreation. This research found that 60 million Americans are bicyclists and 100 million walk for pleasure. Improved sidewalks, trails and bikeways make an evening stroll or bike ride possible and provide public areas where neighbors can get to know each other.

C. PLANNING BACKGROUND & POLICY DIRECTION

Numerous levels of government in the United States have been addressing the need to accommodate and encourage non-motorized transportation over the past twenty years. These efforts have transcended administrations and political parties as the need to provide safe mobility to a broader spectrum of the public has become known. Starting with the Federal government and working down to state, regional and

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County policy efforts, this acceptance of the need to design facilities to incorporate pedestrians and bicyclists has become a legal mandate for local and county government, including Skagit County.

1. Federal Policies

a) United States Department of Transportation

The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) is responsible for transportation policies and spending programs at the federal level. Past policies and programs of the USDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), such as the Interstate Highway System, have had tremendous influence on the national transportation system. FHWA works with Departments of Transportation (DOT's) in each state to implement policies and programs.

In 1991, Congress passed, and President George Bush signed, landmark transportation legislation that set a new direction for transportation policy. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) recognized the importance of bicycling and walking in creating a balanced transportation system.

Key provisions included in ISTEA regarding bicycling and walking include:

- A ten percent set aside of Surface Transportation Program funding for transportation enhancements, including facilities for bicycling and walking;
- The opening of numerous other funding programs to pay for bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
- The requirement that all States and MPOs prepare long range transportation plans that include bicycling and walking; and
- The requirement that each state appoint a bicycle and pedestrian coordinator.

Following the adoption of ISTEA, the U.S. Department of Transportation published the National Bicycling and Walking Study (NBWS) in 1994. The NBWS translated the recognition of non-motorized travel embodied in ISTEA into two specific goals: to double the percentage of trips made by foot and bicycle while simultaneously reducing the number of crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians by 10 percent.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), signed into law on June 9, 1998, carries forward the same programs for bicycling and

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walking established in ISTEA, and also included several new and stronger directives. Important policies and statements included in TEA-21:

- State and MPO long range plans are to "provide consideration of strategies that will increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users."
- Bicyclists and pedestrians shall be given "due consideration" in State and MPO plans.
- Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are to "be considered, where appropriate, with all new construction and reconstruction of transportation facilities."

TEA-21 also requires that the Secretary of Transportation to assure that bicycle and pedestrian linkages are maintained and improved, stating that:

- "The Secretary of Transportation shall not approve any project or take any regulatory action that will result in the severance of an existing major route, or have an adverse impact on the safety of non-motorized transportation traffic and light motorcycles, unless such project or regulatory action provides for a reasonable alternate route or such a route already exists;" and
- "In any case where a highway bridge deck being replaced or rehabilitated with federal financial participation is located on a highway on which bicycles are permitted to operate at each end...and the Secretary determines that the safe accommodation of bicycles can be achieved at reasonable cost, then such bridge shall be so replaced".

In February 1999 FHWA issued a Guidance Memorandum regarding the bicycle and pedestrian provisions of TEA-21. (A copy of the Memorandum can be viewed on the FHWA website.) The memorandum is extremely supportive of bicycling and walking and clearly establishes that these modes are an important component of the transportation system, stating that:

- "To varying extent, bicyclists and pedestrians will be present on all highways where they are permitted and it is clearly the intent of TEA-21 that all new and improved transportation facilities be planned, designed, and constructed with this fact in mind";
- "We expect every transportation agency to make accommodation for bicycling and walking a routine part of their planning, design, construction, operations and maintenance activities";
- "Bicycling and walking ought to be accommodated as an element of good planning, design and operation."

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The guidance also clarified the meaning of "due consideration" stating that:

- A presumption that bicyclists and pedestrians will be accommodated in the design of new and improved transportation facilities
- The decision NOT to accommodate them should be the exception and not the rule
- Must be exceptional circumstances for denying access through design or prohibition.

b) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Administered by the Department of Justice, ADA prohibits State and local governments from discriminating against people with disabilities in all programs, services, and activities. ADA also prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in public transportation provided by public entities. The ADA Accessibility Guidelines do not currently address sidewalks and trails, the United States Access Board is working to develop the guidelines. FHWA published Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access, Part I of II: Review of Existing Guidelines and Practices, in 1999 and recommends that this document be used when considering how best to accommodate persons with disabilities in public rights of way.

2. Washington State Bicycle and Pedestrian Policies

a) State/Local Policies

Some states and local governments find that in addition to making physical improvements to their transportation infrastructure, a variety of their policies affecting bicycle and pedestrian transportation have become outdated or do not support alternative transportation.

Policy changes can include a number of elements:

- Goals that emphasize alternative transportation

Revisions to transportation goals and objectives that include encouraging alternative transportation.

- Changes to standard operating procedures

Policies for standardizing bicycle and pedestrian improvements through the regular activities of local, regional and state governments.

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- Revisions to zoning ordinance and street design standards

Revisions to zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations to encourage and/or require development of bicycle parking ordinances, site plan ordinances that require bicycle amenities such as showers and lockers in addition to bicycle parking, trail development ordinances, and residential street layout requirements that ensure continuity between adjacent developments so that bicyclists and walkers are provided with through-routes.

- Changes to the motor vehicle code

It is important to eliminate laws that are problematic for bicyclists and pedestrians, such as mandatory sidepath laws (requiring bicyclists to use sidepaths if they exist), or laws that require bicyclists to ride in bike lanes if they exist (this is a problem because bicyclists must merge into travel lanes when making left turns, or when there is debris in the bike lane).

b) Non-motorized Transportation Planning Under the Growth Management Act

Skagit County government has an obligation to plan for non-motorized transportation under the Washington State Growth Management Act (RCW 47.80.) Specifically, counties and local government are required to develop plans and programs that are consistent with elements developed and adopted by a Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

RTPO's (in Skagit County, this is the Skagit Council of Governments) are obligated under RCW 47.80.023 to periodically develop a transportation strategy for the region that "shall address alternative transportation modes" and which establishes guidelines and principles that address "development patterns that promote pedestrian and non-motorized transportation" and "present and future railroad right of way corridor utilization."

Such regional plans are further obligated under RCW 47.80.030 to develop a regional transportation plan that "identifies existing or planned transportation facilities, services and programs, including but not limited to...non-motorized services and facilities". Further, it calls on the plan to "address the preservation of the existing regional transportation system, including operations, maintenance, modernization and rehabilitation of...non-motorized facilities".

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Most notably, “All transportation projects, programs, and transportation demand measures within the region that have an impact upon regional facilities or services must be consistent with the (regional) plan and with the adopted regional growth and transportation strategies”.

The Skagit Council of Governments adopted regional non-motorized planning strategies as an element of the Regional Transportation Plan on August 1, 2000. (See below). These policies were developed concurrently with the draft Skagit County Non-motorized Transportation Plan policies of September 2000, and are wholly consistent with (and in most cases identical to) the draft County document.

There are other specific mandates in the Growth Management Act that affect County non-motorized transportation planning. All cities and counties that have adopted comprehensive transportation plans shall adopt transportation programs for the ensuing six calendar years (RCW 36.81.121 (1)). The six-year plans must specifically reference how the County will expend its moneys, including funds made available pursuant to Chapter 47.30 RCW for non-motorized transportation purposes. In addition, the Transportation Plan must detail how the County shall act to preserve railroad right of way in the event that a railroad ceases operation within its jurisdiction (RCW 36.81.121(2&3)).

3. Skagit County Comprehensive Plan Policies

INTRODUCTION

The Growth Management Act has very specific requirements for Comprehensive Plan Transportation Elements. To meet these Transportation Element requirements, Skagit County has developed this Transportation Systems Plan (TSP) which includes a transportation inventory land use assumptions, travel forecasts, LOS standards, current and future transportation needs, and a transportation financial plan among others pursuant to RCW 36.70A.070(6). In this section only the transportation goals, objectives, and policies relating to non-motorized transportation are presented, and together with the TSP as a whole represent the complete Transportation Element of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan.

A) SKAGIT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 9

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To provide a safe, efficient and interconnected system of trails and bikeways, including both on- and off-street facilities that link populated areas of the county with important travel destinations.

Comprehensive Plan Policies

- 9A-9.1** The County shall work toward linking public transportation to the non-motorized system.
- 9A-9.2** The County shall take advantage of existing public lands and right-of-way in the development of the non-motorized transportation system.
- 9A-9.3** Rail corridors should be preserved through the use of rail banking programs after affected property owners and their property rights are first adequately and legally addressed.
- 9A-9.4** The county should explore with affected property owners, as well as diking and drainage districts, the possibility of using existing dikes for trails if the underlying property owners cooperate and liability issues for all affected property owners are satisfied.
- 9A-9.5** A regional system of on- and off-road routes and trails that serve the needs of non-motorized travel modes shall be identified, mapped and included in capital projects funding for development and maintenance.
- 9A-9.6** The diverse needs of bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian travel modes should be accommodated through appropriate routing and the utilization of single- and shared-use facilities.
- 9A-9.7** All significant traffic generators such as neighborhoods and communities should be interconnected with each other as well as with a wide variety of destinations including schools, employment and commercial centers, medical and social service centers, shopping areas, recreation sites and facilities (public and private), scenic areas, transit stops, ferry terminals, rail stations and other transportation modes (multi-modal and inter-modal), touring destinations, and adjoining counties.
- 9A-9.8** Convenient access to and from non-motorized facilities should be provided.
- 9A-9.9** The development of affordable, cost-effective non-motorized transportation system in terms of right-of-way acquisition, design, development, maintenance and the incorporation of non-motorized facilities into multi-modal facilities shall be promoted.
- 9A-9.10** Recreational use of the non-motorized transportation system shall be considered central to its purpose where appropriate.
- 9A-9.11** System, planning, funding, and development should be coordinated with other local, regional, state, federal and tribal jurisdictions.
- 9A-9.12** The County should address liability issues that may concern property owners on whose property trails are located.

OBJECTIVE 10

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To achieve a high standard in meeting the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians and equestrians through appropriate planning, design, construction and maintenance of user-friendly facilities, including single-user and multi-user trails, roads and road shoulders, bikeways, bike lanes and related improvements.

- 9A-10.1** The development of high-standard facilities, both new and upgraded, throughout Skagit County, including designated bike lanes, paved shoulders, wide curb lanes, shared traffic lanes, and paved and unpaved separated paths should be promoted.
- 9A-10.2** The needs of recreational travel as well as commuter and utilitarian travel should be accommodated.
- 9A-10.3** The development of land and transportation systems that are friendly to the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians shall be encouraged.
- 9A-10.4** Alternative routes and facility design in the on-going development of the non-motorized system shall be considered.
- 9A-10.5** Hazards and obstacles to non-motorized transportation opportunities shall be minimized.
- 9A-10.6** Regular and ongoing maintenance of all new and existing facilities shall be provided on an equitable basis.
- 9A-10.7** Sites and facilities shall be developed in an economically and environmentally responsible manner that also respects the county's unique character.
- 9A-10.8** Minimum bicycle parking standards for land use, subdivision and development activities including acceptable rack design should be established.
- 9A-10.9** The needs of the physically disadvantaged in the design of facilities shall be accommodated in accordance with state and federal laws.
- 9A-10.10** Access and trailhead facilities should include adequate parking and sanitation.
- 9A-10.11** Development of facilities that are aesthetically pleasing and complementary to the natural surroundings shall be promoted.
- 9A-10.12** Washington State Department of Transportation shall be encouraged to provide for non-motorized transportation on State Route 20.

OBJECTIVE 11

To recognize public safety, education, and law enforcement as integral to the development of non-motorized transportation opportunities in Skagit County.

- 9A-11.1** The County shall promote the safe use of facilities and conformance with rules of the road.
- 9A-11.2** The County shall encourage educational programs that teach or encourage safety for all non-motorized users.
- 9A-11.3** Awareness among motorists of the rights and responsibilities of both motorists and cyclists and the importance of "sharing the road" should be promoted.

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- 9A-11.4** Planning, design and educational programs that help minimize conflicts among users shall be encouraged.
- 9A-11.5** Cultural, historic and natural interpretive sites and facilities, situated on public lands, shall be developed in such a way that non-motorized travelers can enjoy them.
- 9A-11.6** Non-motorized transportation shall be promoted as a viable, healthy, nonpolluting alternative to the single occupancy automobile.
- 9A-11.7** Bicycle safety should be integrated with the driver's licensing program.

TOURISM, RECREATION SPECIAL EVENTS, AND SCENIC HIGHWAYS

OBJECTIVE 15

To assist tourism, recreation, and special events by maintaining an efficient, adequate and safe road system.

- 9A-15.5** The County shall encourage bicycle tour events to use roads that are deemed compatible with such use in the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan.
- 9A-19.2** The County will identify bridges that are restricting the movement of goods and non-motorized transportation due to insufficient width or weight limits and provide for corrective measures.
- 9A-22.7** The County shall adopt development regulations and road standards that improve the safety of pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- 9A-22.8** The County shall incorporate standards within the land development regulations to ensure that new development and redevelopment provide adequate motorized and non-motorized transportation facilities within and adjacent to the development.
- 9A-23.4** The County shall consider the use of impact fees as a means to ensure that adequate facilities (including but not limited to transit, pedestrian, bikeways, or roadways) are available to accommodate the direct impacts of new growth and development.

2.0 Non-motorized Transportation Planning Goals & Policies

The purpose of the NMTP is to provide a framework for the development of non-motorized transportation facilities and strategies that can satisfy current and future needs of the people of Skagit County and to meet the expectations and requirements of both the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan and state statutes. To accomplish this, general goals, several long-term objectives and a number of specific policies have been developed which address the needs of bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian modes of travel, as well as intermodal opportunities within the larger transportation system.

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The plan objectives speak to the public's vision for non-motorized transportation opportunities over the next ten to twenty years. The policies represent building blocks and incremental steps that must be taken now and in the near future in order to achieve that vision.

Non-motorized Transportation goals focus on three major themes: 1) the overall non-motorized transportation system, 2) specific facilities and design standards that comprise the system, and 3) related issues involving public safety, education and law enforcement.

B) SKAGIT COUNTY NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION GENERAL GOAL STATEMENT (From Skagit Sub-Regional Transportation Organization)

It is the policy of Skagit County to serve the publics' current and future non-motorized transportation needs. The development and implementation of facilities and strategies outlined in this plan should be responsive to a full range of issues and concerns, including engineering and design, safety, education, law enforcement and encouragement of non-motorized travel as a viable alternative to the single-occupancy automobile.

Objective #1 The Non-motorized Transportation System

To provide a safe, efficient and interconnected system of trails and bikeways, including both on- and off-street facilities, that link populated areas of the county with important travel destinations, including activity centers, educational centers (high schools and colleges) and residential areas.

Policies:

- The Skagit County non-motorized transportation system is comprised of all streets and highways to which access by bicyclists and pedestrians is permitted, separated trails and pathways which have a transportation function as defined in this plan, and any system or design accommodations meant to serve non-motorized users.
- In addition to the system described above, Skagit County will identify and map a countywide system of key streets and separated shared use facilities which are high priority facilities for specific non-motorized improvements and/or development. However, most non-motorized improvements on this network will be made when general reconstruction, major maintenance or new construction allows application of new design standards to be applied as a cost-effective element of the overall project.

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- New and reconstructed roads across Skagit County should be designed and constructed to a standard which accommodates the safety, mobility and access needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and (where appropriate) equestrians. It is understood that on certain rural road facilities standards of accommodation may be met without specific facility upgrades.
- Provide for the diverse needs of bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian modes through appropriate routing and the utilization of single-use and shared-use facilities.
- Connect all significant traffic generators (such as neighborhoods and communities) with each other as well as with a wide variety of destinations including schools, employment and commercial centers, medical and social service centers, shopping areas, recreation sites and facilities (public and private), scenic areas, transit stops, ferry terminals, rail and other transportation stations, touring destinations, and the non-motorized facilities and systems of adjoining counties.
- Provide convenient access to and from abutting sites and facilities.
- Promote the development of a cost-effective non-motorized transportation system in terms of right-of-way acquisition, design, development, maintenance and the incorporation of non-motorized facilities into multi-modal facilities.
- Utilize existing public and quasi-public lands in the development of the non-motorized transportation system.
- Accommodate, where appropriate, recreational use of the non-motorized transportation system.
- Coordinate system planning, funding, design and development with other local, regional, state, federal and tribal jurisdictions.

Objective #2 Facilities & Standards

To achieve a high standard in meeting the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians and equestrians through appropriate planning, design, construction and maintenance of user-friendly facilities, including single-user and multi-user trails, roads and road shoulders, bikeways, bikelanes and related improvements.

Policies:

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- Skagit County should strive to provide safety for bicyclists of all abilities through enhanced transportation system design. Current AASHTO (1999) and WSDOT standards should be (and are) used as a minimum standard to be applied on regional facilities to be considered for funding through state and regional programs.
- Encourage land and transportation system development that accommodates the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians and (where appropriate) equestrians.
- Remove or minimize hazards, barriers and impediments to non-motorized transportation.
- Preserve or acquire land, easements or other access to railroad grades (including rail-banking), utility corridors, unique open space areas, or other potential corridors that may be valuable for future trail development. Such preservation and acquisition shall include due consideration of needs of adjacent residents and property owners, and should primarily serve transportation purposes if transportation funds are used in the development of such facilities.
- Establish minimum bicycle parking standards for subdivision and development activities including acceptable rack design.
- Skagit County shall make every effort as defined by the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act to accommodate the needs of the disabled in the design and operation of transportation facilities.
- Promote the development of facilities which are aesthetically pleasing and complementary to the natural surroundings and that also respects the County's unique character.

Objective #3 Safety, Education & Enforcement

The County should increase education, information and traffic enforcement efforts associated with non-motorized transportation as a means of lowering collision and injury rates associated with these modes. Such efforts should extend to all highway users, including motorists. New programs and initiatives that further these aims should be integrated into existing safety, education and enforcement efforts within the County. Programs which specifically address non-motorized travel should be developed in conjunction with user groups, school districts and law enforcement agencies as demand for these programs grows.

Policies:

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

- Promote the safe use of facilities and conformance with rules of the road by all road users.
- Promote community and school-based educational programs that teach and encourage safe bicycling including traffic safety and the use of bicycle helmets.
- Encourage reasonable and balanced enforcement of regulations for motorized and non-motorized travel.
- Help build awareness among motorists of the rights and responsibilities of both motorists and cyclists and the importance of sharing the road.
- Encourage planning, design and educational programs that help minimize conflicts among users.

C) Skagit County NMTP Major Policies

1. Non-motorized Transportation System

A countywide system of primary and secondary non-motorized travel routes is recommended. The system utilizes existing roads and highways, abandoned railroad grades, utility corridors, and public open space, as well as land, easements or other right-of-way that may become available in the future.

2. General Facility Recommendations

- The countywide non-motorized transportation system consists of all roads, highways, sidewalks and other facilities. Specific recommendations are made for the type of facility that is most desirable or appropriate for each trail or roadway segment to which bicyclists and pedestrians have legal access. Additional attention is paid to a network of key facilities upon which is envisioned specific facility improvements, such as bike lanes, paved shoulders, development of pathways and trails, and other system improvements.
- Maintenance of existing facilities, especially regular sweeping of paved road shoulders, is a high priority. Shoulder sweeping of primary on-street routes can potentially bring the greatest benefit to non-motorized travel at the lowest cost. Regular maintenance should also be provided for as new facilities are developed.

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

- Priority routes are also identified for improvement within incorporated areas of the county. Although the cities have discretion over these improvements, the routes listed in the Non-motorized Plan represent priorities in linking urban areas to the regional non-motorized transportation system. As the cities plan for non-motorized transportation in the urban areas, Skagit County may need to review and/or revise portions of the system described in this plan. This document, upon review and recommendation by the Skagit RTPO, will be reviewed and adopted by Skagit County as their regional non-motorized transportation planning and policy document.

3. Design Standards & Guidelines

The plan recommends that all facilities be designed, developed and maintained in accordance with recognized federal, state and local standards and guidelines, specifically the 1999 edition of the AASHTO Guideline to the Development of Bicycle Facilities, the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, and the Washington State Design Manual.

4. Regulatory Recommendations

Reasonable zoning, shoreline and subdivision requirements, development standards, impact fees, and incentives should be adopted by Skagit County and other jurisdictions to help ensure that facilities for non-motorized transportation are included in all developments except where they are clearly inappropriate.

5. Safety, Education & Enforcement

Safety, education and law enforcement are key to the success of non-motorized transportation plans and programs and should be encouraged and supported at all levels of County government

A non-motorized transportation facilities user map and information brochure, periodically updated, should be made available to the public.

6. Intermodal Transportation

Non-motorized travel modes should be accommodated to the greatest extent practical in the design and operation of all multimodal facilities (such as transit stops, ferry terminals, , Skagit Regional Airport, and motor vehicle park and ride lots), except where clearly inappropriate .

7. Funding & Implementation

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

Strategies for implementation of this plan have been developed, including specific recommendations for funding, administration, right-of-way acquisition and related needs. Projects that potentially qualify for both transportation and recreation funding sources should be prioritized for transportation funding purposes based upon the degree to which the project addresses safety, access and mobility for non-motorized users.

8. Neighborhoods and Activity Areas

Design and locate transportation systems in such a manner as to contribute to the safety, efficiency and convenience of residential neighborhoods and activity centers. Bicycle, pedestrian, and (where appropriate) equestrian needs should be incorporated as a central component of this effort, through land uses and practices conducive to non-motorized transportation.

9. Energy

Comprehensive Plan policies calling for the development of an energy-efficient transportation system should be implemented in part through the promotion of bicycle and pedestrian-compatible transportation system design and land use practices.

10. Accessible Transportation Systems

Skagit County should work with local and regional transit providers (including AMTRAK and the Washington State Ferries) to provide a transit system that is fully accessible for pedestrians and the disabled, and which integrates as thoroughly as possible the access, safety and parking needs of bicyclists.

11. Safety and Convenience

Skagit County should emphasize non-motorized safety, mobility and access as an integral element of transportation planning and facility development.

12. Dedicated Facilities/New Development

The development of facilities supporting non-motorized transportation should be required as a regular element of the development review process. Such incorporation and design review should also be a component of the development of public projects. Incentives should be provided to the private sector to encourage development of facilities beyond those required as dedicated improvements.

13. Funding Priority

Appropriately funded non-motorized transportation projects are they key to meeting the goals of this plan. This can be accomplished through the expansion of funding for existing programs, effective utilization of available targeted grant programs, and institutionalization of non-motorized transportation facility design in County and local design standards.

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

14. Equestrian

The County should incorporate the needs of local equestrian travel in the design of facilities located in areas populated or frequently traveled by equestrians, and strive to integrate these facilities with the other non-motorized needs of these areas whenever practical and appropriate.

D) Skagit County NMTP Mode-Specific Policies

1. BICYCLE POLICIES

The development of an engineering response to the needs of bicyclists depends heavily on adherence to a consistently applied set of design standards which integrates the safety and mobility needs of the bicycle, regardless of the purpose for which a particular trip is taken. The following policies lay the foundation for the development of “bicycle friendly” design principles on the road system of Skagit County:

a. Design

The design, construction and maintenance of all County roads should provide for the needs of bicyclists, with specific added attention given to those roads established and defined on a network of designated key bicycling streets and corridors.

b. Funding Commitment

The County should make a strong funding commitment to building bicycle facilities and to incorporating them in all new road construction and reconstruction of roads on the bicycle network. This commitment includes the programming of funds set aside for the use of Skagit County under RCW 47.30

c. Adopted Standards

The County should provide greater safety for bicyclists of all abilities through enhanced transportation system design. Current AASHTO (1999) and WSDOT standards should be established as the minimum for inclusion in the County Road Standards, as well as a standard to be applied on regional facilities to be considered for funding through state and regional programs.

d. Rural Facility Standards

The preferred facility for roads on the bicycle network in rural areas is a paved shoulder with edge stripe. While such facilities are desirable whenever they are developed, priority should be given first to projects that address existing safety deficiencies. Signing of paved shoulders as Class II (bike lane) facilities should only

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

be done if the shoulder meets the minimum standard for width and pavement quality over a substantial portion of its length. It is understood that on many rural roads with low traffic volumes and speeds, the preferred facility may be a shared facility without specific shoulder or bikelane improvements

e. Priority Areas

Non-motorized projects should be planned and designed to serve areas near schools, recreation facilities, commercial/industrial areas, activity centers, tourist areas and established or planned multi-use trails.

f. Project Types

Projects on the designated network should be designed with either a:

- Outside lane width of fourteen feet;
- Striped bike lanes;
- Paved and edge-striped shoulders; or
- Access to a separated trail facility.

It is understood that on many rural roads with low traffic volumes and speeds, the preferred facility may be a shared facility without specific shoulder or bikelane improvements

g. Special Facility Consideration

Additional consideration shall be given to proposed projects that can:

- Address topographic constraints to bicycle access;
- Develop new through access across man-made or geographic barriers; or
- Provide a usable and direct alternative to highways with high volumes and/or vehicle speeds

h. Limited Access Highways

The County shall actively seek the provision of separate non-motorized facilities in any and all cases where existing access is removed via construction or re-designation as a limited-access highway.

i. Shoulder Development

The County should develop the transportation system to a standard which incorporates the needs of bicyclists, and which integrates public involvement into the planning for shoulder development through existing maintenance programs.

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

It is understood that on many rural roads with low traffic volumes and speeds, the preferred facility may be a shared facility without specific shoulder or bikelane improvements

j. Maintenance

The County should continue to emphasize maintenance in the accommodation of bicyclists on the County road system, with an emphasis on road sweeping and the ongoing development of smooth and continuous road shoulders.

k. Railroad Grade Crossings

Skagit County and railroads owning right of way in Skagit County should actively seek to identify all at-grade crossings that do not cross roadways at 90 degree angles. While all crossings should be developed to minimize hazards to bicyclists, projects which eliminate the hazard of bicyclists being forced to turn into adjacent traffic lanes should be emphasized. The use of rubber matting and approach ramps and aprons should be encouraged at these locations. The cooperation and understanding of railroads is vital to the successful implementation of this policy, and the County and railroads must continue to work proactively to protect the safety of the non-motorized public.

l. Relationship to Skagit County Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan

The county has an adopted Regional Parks and Trails Plan which identified a number of potential trail projects for development county-wide. The inclusion of projects from the Parks Plan in this document is recommended only if the identified project would be considered eligible for state and federal transportation funding. While all but circuit paths are technically eligible for this funding, priority should be given to projects which:

- Serve destinations, areas and land uses cited in the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan for development,
- Serve as diversified a user population as possible,
- Provide usable access for local pedestrians,
- Provide an alternative to routes which are inaccessible or potentially hazardous to bicyclists,
- Provide relatively direct access to identified destinations, and
- Provide a specific contribution to the development of the county bicycle network.

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

m. Special Events

Skagit County should establish clear and consistent policies and procedures for the review and approval of special events (competitive, recreational or mass participation) which incorporate non-motorized modes, and encourage their promotion when conducted in accordance with these adopted policies and procedures. Competitive events should be consistent with the adopted State of Washington Bicycle Racing Guidelines.

2. PEDESTRIAN POLICIES

a. Funding Priorities

Whenever practical and appropriate, the County should identify and commit both targeted and general roadway funds to build needed pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks (in urban or town areas), paths, separated grade crossings, signalized crossings and other devices to improve the environment for the pedestrian. In addition, consideration of pedestrian safety programs aimed at youth, the disabled and seniors should be a priority of the County in the planning and review of roads and land development.

b. Facility Standards and Seniors

Facility and signal standards should be reviewed to accommodate the needs of an aging public, particularly in regard to signal phase length, sign size, reflectivity of signs, street lighting and the crossing distance required of these at-risk pedestrians.

c. Sidewalk & Facility Maintenance

The County should continue and if possible increase efforts to repair and maintain pedestrian facilities through a cooperative effort of the County, homeowners, developers and businesses.

d. Design Standards & Project Review

New residential and employment area development should incorporate designated pedestrian design elements, both on and off of the road system where appropriate.

f. Area Planning

As local and community plans are developed, attention should be paid to the identification of specific pedestrian projects and needs, including:

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

- Design and implementation of pedestrian facilities in designated activity centers;
- Potential transit development, and assessment of pedestrian facilities within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of any proposed or existing transit facility, including rail, ferry, park & rides, and along existing transit routes; and
- Facilities linking neighborhoods to existing or proposed parks, schools, major recreation facilities, or commercial and employment centers.

g. Pedestrian Districts

Development of policies regarding the development of the pedestrian environment at activity areas and centers should be a priority of the County and local land use planning process. Developments such as Bayview Ridge illustrate the type of activity in which a greater level of dedicated pedestrian facility development may be justified in an otherwise rural area.

h. Subdivisions and Master Planned Communities

The review of large subdivisions and master planned communities should address the following issues:

- Internal pedestrian circulation in commercial and high-density residential areas;
- Access to transit, including continuous walkways to transit stops, ADA-accessible routes, and shelters;
- “Pass-through” walkways that minimize pedestrian and bicycle trip distance to the perimeter of the development;
- Relationship to and preservation of existing local or regional trail systems and other park facilities;
- Linkage to open space, especially dedicated OS-RA areas;
- Inclusion of grade separation facilities at points of contact with major and/or principal arterials; and
- Design compatibility with anticipated equestrian and bicycle traffic.

i. Design Flexibility

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

The County should provide for flexibility in the design and construction of pedestrian facilities to make them safer, more attractive and enjoyable for users, allowing for the use of different material construction techniques to reflect local taste and diversity on non-arterial roads.

It is understood that on many rural roads with low traffic volumes and speeds, the preferred facility may be a shared facility without specific shoulder or walkway improvements.

j. Road Vacation Policies

Road vacation applications should be reviewed for their compatibility and potential impact on non-motorized facility development

k. Education and Safety

The County should increase education and enforcement efforts as essential elements of a comprehensive pedestrian safety and access commitment. This effort should focus on the needs of students, the elderly and the developmentally and physically disabled.

3. EQUESTRIAN POLICIES

Skagit County should identify barriers to safe equestrian access and circulation in established equestrian communities and in locations where safe access to trails and other equestrian facilities is an issue.

Equestrian communities can be loosely defined as areas containing one or more of the following elements:

- Proximity to a regional trail which is accessible to horses;
- Significant tracts of land in which horseback riding is publicly sanctioned;
- Private land upon which equestrian recreational access has traditionally been granted, or with access to dedicated public open space;
- Commercial stabling operations;
- Commercial riding schools and arenas;
- Presence of supporting businesses such as tack shops and feed stores; and
- Concentrations of private parcels upon which horses are kept.

4. IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

a. Direction

Unless specifically prohibited, the design and construction/reconstruction of roads and highways should assume the presence of pedestrians and bicyclists, and shall be designed to accommodate their presence and needs.

b. Project Review for Non-motorized Design

All County, federally-supported and WSDOT projects proposed in Skagit County should be reviewed for the inclusion of appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities and mitigation, per the adopted policies and procedures of the lead jurisdiction.

c. Citizen Participation & Advisory Committees

Program initiatives should be incorporated within existing County programs. Efforts should be made by transportation agencies to incorporate the input and concerns of private individuals affected by non-motorized facility development with the goal of identifying issues in advance of project development, and to facilitate effective mitigation of project impacts such that the public good and private rights can be reconciled to the greatest extent possible.

d. Public Process & Right-of-Way Acquisition

The County shall provide a public review process equal in scope and outreach to that used for general transportation facilities (such as roads) when development of such facilities might require acquisition of right of way from private interests, whether the acquisition is through eminent domain, negotiated sale, or the assemblage of easements.

e. Trails on Dikes

A significant element of the research supporting this plan is represented by the Skagit County Dike Trail Feasibility Study. The study was requested by the County to investigate issues raised by Dike Districts, parks agencies and the public during the development of the Draft Skagit County Non-motorized Transportation Plan in 1996. The development of the study incorporated significant input from the Dike Districts, local and state agencies as well as the general public.

At the time the Study and revised plan were being finalized, a concern was expressed on the part of several Dike Districts that the Feasibility Study not be incorporated into the Proposed Final Non-motorized Transportation Plan. Accordingly, a summary of the points presented was included but the Study was not formally included in the Plan.

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

In addition, the following two policies should govern the development of future trail projects proposed for locations on dikes:

- Any future trail projects proposed on dikes shall require the Planning and Permit Center to meet, consult, and obtain the approval of any involved dike district and affected property owner.
- The County will complete necessary and adequate environmental review prior to issuing a Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance for each specific project proposal on dikes or levees.

f. Regional Consistency

The County shall coordinate closely with other jurisdictions within and adjacent to the County to ensure consistency in planning and developing non-motorized transportation projects and programs.

g. Transit

Skagit County and SKAT should work cooperatively to identify and implement plans and programs to update bicycle parking at transit facilities, as well as improve pedestrian and bicycle access to transit centers, park and rides and selected transit stops.

h. Design Standards

Skagit County should employ standards that meet the guidelines of the current edition of the AASHTO Guide to the Development of Bicycle Facilities as the basis for relevant sections of the Skagit County Road Standards, and should formally adopt these guidelines for development of transportation-funding eligible components of the County Regional Trail system. Every effort should be made to develop the regional non-motorized transportation system to a standard that meets or exceeds the current AASHTO Guidelines.

i. WSDOT Network

Skagit County should work closely with the district office of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to ensure that the projects and initiatives presented in this plan (especially those located on the state transportation network) are as comprehensively implemented as possible. For purposes of this plan, all WSDOT highways where bicyclists and pedestrians may operate are to be considered part of the Skagit County network of key streets.

j. Shared Use Trails and Pathways Developed with Transportation Funds

X. Non-Motorized Transportation

Non-motorized transportation facilities separated from road rights of way should be considered for development with transportation resources if they:

- Provide needed access and increased safety across gaps in the non-motorized transportation system;
- Provide linkages to the Regional Trails System;
- Eliminate barriers to non-motorized transportation access;
- Are associated with projects in which access will be removed from a portion of the transportation system previously open to pedestrians and bicyclists; or
- Provide access to new transit or transportation facilities.