

Walking for exercise, health or recreational enjoyment has resulted in increasing numbers of pedestrians along our streets, roads and highways. Regrettably, walking and walkways are often overlooked as an important form of transportation in our community.

## EXISTING SITUATION

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Where walkways do exist in our community, they are generally adjacent and parallel to our streets. In some single-purpose areas -- schools, shopping centers, apartment complexes, parks and subdivisions -- walkways may adjoin parking lots or provide pedestrian connections between buildings.

The City of Owensboro has completed 9 miles of the Adkisson Greenbelt Park walking/biking trails. More information about this pedestrian trail can be found in sections 560 Bikeways and 640 Public Parks and Recreation.

## PROBLEMS AND DEFICIENCIES

Obviously, the greatest potential for pedestrian and vehicular conflict and accidents is along our most heavily traveled streets. Unfortunately, many of our major streets have inadequate walkways, evidenced by a complete lack of a pedestrian facility (J. R. Miller Boulevard, Southtown Boulevard); intermittent or spotty walks (Booth Avenue, Frederica Street, Griffith Avenue, Scherm Road, Tamarack Road); or existing walks that are broken-up (Triplett Street). Additionally, numerous local streets do not have adequate walkways, particularly in neighborhoods built before the 1970s.

Undoubtedly, the pedestrian's major problem when crossing the street is the traffic flow and the intimidating street widths of some intersections. Especially troublesome are intersections along arterial streets where the intersecting streets are collectors, arterials or freeways. Crosswalks and pedestrian time on traffic lights are considered feasible only in high-volume pedestrian areas such as Frederica Street, the Downtown area or trail crossings.

Another sidewalk problem at street intersections is the difficulty that box curbs -- and to some extent roll and V-curbs -- pose to bicycles, wheelchairs, strollers and similar pedestrian-propelled equipment. The Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) outlines provisions for the installation of handicapped or sidewalk ramps at street intersections. Since its inception, new sidewalks within the community have been closely monitored to include ramps. Except for the ramps installed during city or state reconstruction projects, the vast majority of our streets and intersections constructed prior to 1990 do not have ramps.

Most large areas of single-purpose activity are on private property, and often beyond regulation by government in terms of walkway design. Although some have incorporated good walkway system, others are still in need of improvement (for example, retail center parking lots).

Although not life-threatening, another problem for the pedestrian can be gutter spray. The construction of walks abutting the back of the curb, although not desirable, is often necessary due to right-of-way limitations and the needs for vehicular lanes. This situation results in not only pedestrians being splashed during

periods of rain, but also in the walk being used as a parking surface when installed along roll and V-curb streets.

## PROGRAMS AND REGULATIONS

Sidewalk improvements within the existing developed areas of the City of Owensboro are made through two programs.

The city administers a sidewalk program for the repair or replacement of existing deteriorated sidewalks in residential areas. The city will provide the concrete as long as the property owner uses a bonded contractor and pays for the labor. Requests are filed with the City Engineering Department and funded on a first come, first served basis as long as the annual funding holds out.

The second program uses federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to install new walks or reconstruct existing walks in low-to-moderate income neighborhoods of the City. This program is available in both residential and nonresidential neighborhoods.

The subdivision regulations of the Owensboro Metropolitan Planning Commission require the installation of walks in residential subdivision with lots smaller than one-half acre; and, are not required in residential subdivisions where lots are one-half acre or larger. Generally walks are required in business and professional service zones, but generally are not required in industrial zones. As a result of these regulatory requirements, most new urban development has walkways. However, there are several examples of new business developments along major streets where walks have not been required because of conflicting open drainage systems or highway shoulders.

## FUTURE NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Our most important future need is to give greater consideration to the pedestrian and bicyclist when designing roadways. We should also look for alternatives to standard walkways adjacent and parallel to streets. Whenever possible, full consideration should be given to designing a walkway system on its own right-of-way (and away from streets) as a legitimate and desirable use of the land.

The following are recommendations to meet the identified needs:

1. First priority for walkway improvements within the existing urban area should be given along arterial and collector streets; and, if at all feasible, provided along both sides;
2. Continue to require handicapped or sidewalk ramps on all sidewalks at street intersections during any street or walk construction or reconstruction project;
3. During subdivision and development plan review the planning staff and planning commission should insure that adequate, safe, and attractive walkways are provided for pedestrians either as a completely separate facility or along the street (particularly arterial and collector streets) Additionally, assurance of an adequate walkway facility in large single-purpose activity area could be reviewed and encouraged during subdivision and development plan review; and,
4. Finally, when our various governments (state, county, or city) construct or reconstruct curbed and guttered streets, provisions should always be made for walkways.