

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

For nearly seventy years, children and a few adults used bicycles mainly for recreation. By 1975, the interest in bicycles began to boom. Several factors encouraged the bicycle explosion:

- ◆ automobile traffic congestion increased,
- ◆ concern about air pollution grew,
- ◆ interest in physical fitness increased,
- ◆ finding downtown parking space became more difficult, and
- ◆ people tired of walking distances that take only a few minutes to cover on bikes.

As part of the 1975 *Owensboro Urban Area Transportation Study*, a *Bicycle Facilities Plan* was prepared which consisted of a network of bikeways to be developed by 1990. This plan was never implemented, being relegated to a low priority in the total transportation program. In 1977, the Green River Area Development District prepared the *Owensboro Urbanized Area Bicycle Facility Plan* to explore the bicycle's potential viability through the planned implementation of a safe, comprehensive bikeway system. In 1993, the Green River Area Development District prepared the *Owensboro Urbanized Area Bicycle Plan* that identified streets for bike lanes although the plan was ultimately not implemented.

CITY CONNECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

In 2004, the City Connections Committee was challenged to develop an intra-city system of bike lanes, sidewalks and trails that will extend the Adkisson Greenbelt Park and connect neighborhoods to schools, parks, business, and entertainment districts. Committee members included neighborhood alliance representatives, city staff, transportation and community health personnel, and citizens-at-large.

The existing street system in Owensboro was designed to serve automobile, truck and bus traffic. There is a great need to provide for safe bicycle facilities to help avoid bicycle-motor vehicle conflicts. In addition to designing for bicycles within the constraints of the existing transportation system, there is also a need to provide separate, independent facilities for those not comfortable with using on-street bicycle lanes. These facilities are referred to as shared use paths.

The purpose of this study is threefold: (1) to update and revise previous studies, (2) to prepare a comprehensive Bikeway System Plan to serve as the bikeway master plan guide for future transportation improvements and (3) to outline fundamental bicycle planning policies to emphasize safety, educational, and enforcement programs.

TYPES OF FACILITIES

There are three types of bikeway facilities: bike paths, bike lanes and bike routes.

Bike paths (Class I facilities)

are designed for the exclusive use of bicyclists. They are physically separated from motor vehicle roadways, but may run parallel to roadways along the edge of street right-of-way. Bike

paths should be located at least five feet from the path of motor vehicles and marked with official bikeway signs, to minimize conflicts between bicyclists and motorists.

Bike lanes (Class II facilities)

are intended for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. They are developed within the cross section of a vehicular roadway, usually in the outside lane adjacent to the curb or in the parking lane as a shared parking bike lane. The bicycle lane is delineated by means of pavement markings such as a white stripe, bike symbol, directional arrows or wording such as "bike lane."

Bike routes (Class III facilities)

differ from bike lanes in that no portion of the roadway is set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles. The bike route has no barrier - either symbolic or physical - to delineate a portion of the roadway for bicycles. The bike route is identified by posted signs along the roadway for route guidance and to alert motorists.

As a general guide, a separated bicycle facility should be provided...

- (1) where the average bicycle volume on a nice day in June is 200 or more per day in conjunction with motor vehicle volumes of 2,000 vehicles or more per day, or
- (2) where the same bicycle volumes will be in conjunction with motor vehicular speeds of 40 mph or higher.

TRIP GENERATORS

Because the basic nature of bicycle travel is far less predictable than automobile travel, typical transportation studies and methods are difficult to use. Currently, the majority of bicycle trips are recreational touring or enjoyment-oriented as opposed to the fundamental and predictable automobile work trip. Although with the completion of the Adkisson Greenbelt Park and the City Connections intercity bikeway/walkway projects, neighborhoods are being connected to destinations such as parks, schools, business and entertainment districts, and public non-profit facilities. Bike lane striping will begin in 2006 and connecting trails and sidewalk projects will be built as funding is available.

PLAN PROPOSALS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Incorporating the design and construction of bikeway facilities into the roadway plans prior to final design and construction will reduce bikeway costs considerably; often without substantial increase to the roadway costs (far less than if both facilities are constructed independently). This plan has not been implemented.

Along the southern edge of Daviess County, running east to west between Whitesville and Utica, an existing interstate bikeway route crosses our county. This route was established as part of the Nation's Bicentennial celebration and is called the Trans-American Bike Route. In order to provide a touring route and access to this interstate bike system, the long range plan proposed a Trans-American Trail connector along rural roads between Owensboro, Whitesville and Utica (see Exhibit 563-M1).

A successful bikeway plan must include elements of engineering, education and enforcement. These three elements go together and

deficiencies in any one will undermine the chances of success in the others. Owensboro has built a strong foundation in the education phase; this plan outlines the necessary engineering, but increased effort in the area of enforcement is essential to complete the total plan. Every effort should be made to continuously evaluate the success of each of these elements as they are implemented.

BICYCLE SAFETY

The Owensboro Police Department has taken a substantial interest in bicycle travel. The City has a local bicycle ordinance, mandatory dealer registration with voluntary individual owner registration and bicycle safety is being taught to all fifth grade students within the city school system by the Owensboro Police Department. The police department has emerged as the leader of all these bicycle programs and activities, and has shown a sincere concern for the establishment of all necessary measures for the improvement of bike riding safety.

In May of 1996, the police department employed a bicycle-street crimes unit manned by two patrolmen. As of 2006, the unit operates with one sergeant and 17 patrolmen. The bike officers routinely patrol many areas not covered by vehicle or foot patrol. Due to the speed and mobility of the bike, the officers cover four to six times the area as a foot patrol officer. The bike officer is able to see and hear more than in a patrol vehicle since the officer is in the open and not surrounded by the enclosed vehicle.

The City of Owensboro has devoted a section of the city's traffic ordinances to bicycles. The city's bicycle ordinance is based on the Uniform Vehicle Code: Model Traffic Ordinance, which has been published as the Model Bicycle Ordinance by the American Automobile Association (AAA). The Owensboro Bicyclist Handbook is a free pamphlet provided by the Owensboro Police Department that explains the city ordinance pertaining to bicycles and informs bike riders of the basic rules and laws governing bicycles in the City of Owensboro. Important bicycle safety tips include:

- ◆ Give way to overtaking bicyclists. Move to the right to allow them to pass if this can be done safely.
- ◆ Bicyclists must use lane when turning, stay to the right, and observe all other rules imposed on automobiles.
- ◆ If a bikeway is designated, bicyclists must use the lanes that are marked-off.
- ◆ When turning, motorists should avoid bicycle lanes as much as possible.
- ◆ Motorists must check for through cyclists before turning. Cyclists must look for turning vehicles. Neither has the right-of-way even if he reaches the intersection first.
- ◆ Only persons twelve years of age or younger may ride on a sidewalk. Under all circumstances the rider shall yield the right-of-way to pedestrians using the sidewalk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Implement the City Connections plan for bikeways and walkways that will connect neighborhoods to schools, parks,

business, and the Adkisson Greenbelt Park.

- ◆ Make provisions for bikeway facilities to be used as an alternative or supplement to public facilities in new subdivisions. For example, a bike path or shared use path may be used along one side of an arterial or collector street in lieu of a walkway.
- ◆ During the planning and design stages of major roadway projects, consideration should be given to the inclusion of appropriate bikeway facilities for the new or improved roadway facility where practicable.

Exhibit 563-M1: Bikeway System Plan, City Connections 2006

