

THE WILLIAMSBURG, JAMES CITY, AND YORK REGIONAL BICYCLE FACILITIES PLAN

The Regional Bicycle Facilities Plan was developed to identify areas in James City County, the City of Williamsburg, and York County where the construction of bikeway facilities is both desirable and appropriate. Initial efforts in 1993 focused on bikeways from a transportation perspective; however, this update incorporates not only transportation-oriented facilities but recreational ones as well, including off-road facilities. This holistic approach is intended to recognize that the bicycle is both a transportation mode and a recreational vehicle while acknowledging that different funding sources may be required to achieve the purposes of each. However, it is also apparent that there can be and is a substantial overlap between trip purposes and the types of facilities serving them.

Purpose

The purpose of the Regional Bicycle Facilities Plan is to encourage the coordinated development of a comprehensive system of bikeways throughout the region primarily as a mode of transportation but also for increased recreational opportunities. Because of the potential recreational aspect and given the unique nature of the Historic Triangle, the development of a regional bikeway system can significantly enhance the area's appeal as a tourist destination and provide direct and indirect economic benefits. Other positive attributes of a regional bikeway system include energy conservation, reduced noise and air pollution, motor vehicle traffic reduction, health and fitness improvement, as well as other personal and economic benefits. The Comprehensive Plans of all three jurisdictions identify a clear need for bikeways in the region and include strategies that specifically call for the development of an integrated bikeway system.

Citizen Input

Several series of public input sessions were held during the development of this plan. These were sponsored by the Historic Triangle Bicycle Advisory Committee (HTBAC), the James City County Parks and Recreation Commission, the York County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and the Williamsburg Department of Parks and Recreation. The first series of meetings occurred on June 4 and 6, 1996 to gather input from citizens. Suggestions from this meeting were subsequently used to create a draft map of proposed bikeways and to identify priorities, and a second series of public input sessions was held on May 8 and 22 to present this information. From there a draft plan was created. This plan was presented at joint public hearings sponsored by the aforementioned bodies on November 13 and 19, 1997.

Bikeway Route Identification

In addition to citizen input, the designation of bikeways in the region was developed through a variety of other sources. Bikeways identified in the 1993 Regional Bikeways Plan, the James City County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the York County Comprehensive Plan, and existing bikeways and bicycle routes were compiled and then displayed on one region-wide map. Existing and planned sidewalks were also shown on this map. This map provided a framework to identify bikeway connections and joint bicycle/pedestrian facility opportunities, and bicycle parking needs. The emphasis throughout the process was to develop logical corridors that could

be used by cyclists of all ability levels for both recreational and commuting purposes. A new feature of this plan is the addition of several off-road facilities, including some specifically for mountain bikes. There is a preference for locating bikeways along lower volume roadways and finding alternative routes to major traffic arteries. Bicycles are recognized under Virginia law as vehicles with the same rights and responsibilities as motor vehicles. Bicycles are allowed on all roads (except limited access facilities such as I-64) and it is recognized that experienced cyclists do use, and will continue to use, many of the high-volume traffic arteries in the community. The Bicycle Facilities Plan is not intended to preclude or discourage the continued use of these streets.

Bicycle Parking

Several locations in the region have been identified for the eventual development of bicycle parking facilities. Some of the locations encourage people to transfer from one mode of transportation to another. These are recommended to be constructed where transit lines, commuter parking lots, and bicycle paths intersect. At these stations, bicycle lockers are proposed to be constructed which provide bicyclists with the opportunity to safely store their bicycles as they change transportation modes. Other places needing bicycle parking were also identified, including employment, shopping, and public centers. It is also recommended that transit buses ultimately be equipped with bicycle racks that would enable individuals to take their bicycles with them while on the bus. These parking locations will make bicycling much more convenient, and, as a result, may increase the popularity of alternative modes of transportation.

Types of Facilities

The Regional Bicycle Facilities Plan identifies three major types of bikeway facilities; these are Multi-Use Trails, Shoulder Bike Lanes, and Shared Roadways. In addition, the plan includes existing bike trails, bikeways on National Park Service property, and potential bikeway corridors and locations that are conceptual in location.

- Multi-Use Trails are constructed physically separate from the roadway. They may either be developed in a separate right-of-way, apart from roads and streets, or as a path within the road right-of-way, but physically separated and protected from motor vehicle traffic. These facilities are usually eight to twelve feet wide and are designed to accommodate two-way bicycle traffic. (See Figure 1)
- Shoulder Bike Lanes are constructed adjacent to traffic lanes and are generally delineated by pavement markings. These bike lanes are typically 3 to 6 feet wide paved shoulders. Shoulder Bike Lanes can also be separate lanes between the travel lanes and on-street parking areas in urban areas. To accommodate two-way traffic, these bike lanes must be constructed on each side of the road. Shoulder bike lanes provide wider right hand travel lanes and are considerably less costly than the multi-use trails. Shoulder bike lanes can often be constructed in conjunction with highway widening projects. (See Figure 2) When preparing the detailed implementation plans for the bikeway network, conflicts may arise in the establishment of shoulder bike lanes, particularly in developed areas. These include right-of-way width (particularly for streets having curbs and gutters), on-street parking,

intersection design, and open space and landscaped areas adjacent to the street. If implementation studies indicate that shoulder bike lanes cannot be constructed in certain areas, shared roadways would be the appropriate designation, and it is possible that in certain instances restriping could allow wider curbside travel lanes providing more room for motorists and cyclists.

- Shared Roadways are travel lanes that are shared by all users of the roadway. Occasionally the travel lanes are widened to 14 or 15 feet rather than the standard 12 feet, but often signage is the only accommodation. There are no bikeway pavement markings associated with these facilities, and the roadway is simply signed as a bicycle route. Typically, shared roadways are only designated on roadways with very light traffic and in developed areas where other modes are not feasible. Shared roadways are easy to develop and are much less costly than the Class I or II facilities and can significantly improve bicycle mobility at relatively low cost.

During the public input sessions, citizens requested that a mixture of bikeway facility types be constructed in the region. The serious cyclists, commuters and racers preferred the shoulder bike lanes, while the casual and family oriented cyclists preferred the multi-use trails. The shared roadways will serve residents in rural areas where alternative routes through residential areas are feasible and appropriate. However, the public also strongly encouraged upgrading of shared roadways wherever possible, especially when roadway construction/improvement work is undertaken. Interconnection of neighborhoods can ultimately be provided with a combination of multi-use trails and shared roadways which will provide access to schools, parks, businesses, and other areas both for neighborhood residents and less experienced cyclists. Shared roadways will be very inexpensive to develop compared to multi-use trails and shoulder bike lanes and can significantly improve bicycle and pedestrian mobility for less experienced riders. Special attention to good planning practices will be necessary to ensure that neighborhood interconnections serve the purpose of facilitating non-motorized mobility without increasing the hazards associated with higher vehicle volumes. Emphasis should be placed on securing rights-of-way for multi-use trails on which motorized traffic would be excluded between neighborhoods. If appropriately located and designed these multi-use trails might serve as an emergency access for fire and rescue services.

Several of the proposed multi-use trails parallel existing roadways. This plan does not propose that cyclists be restricted to the multi-use trails in these situations. It is recognized that the more experienced cyclists may wish to continue to use the parallel roadway in order to avoid conflicts with slower, less experienced cyclists. Because of this, even where parallel multiuse trails are available, efforts to make the roadway more bicycle friendly should continue. This best serves the needs of cyclists and motorists alike.

Funding Strategies

There are a number of potential sources available to fund the construction of the proposed bikeways. The three regional governing bodies are committed to pursuing all alternative funding sources available prior to using local funds exclusively. Some potential federal funding sources include a number of funding categories within the new Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency (ISTEA) Act of 1991 including: National Highway System (NHS) funds,

Enhancement funds within the Surface Transportation Program (STP), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program funds, Scenic Byway program funds, and the National Recreational Trails Act funds. All of these funds are available to state and local governments provided that the locality provides 10 %-20% matching funds. Secondary System and road construction funds are available when bikeways are constructed concurrently with road improvements. Similarly, Primary System funds may be available for bikeway development in conjunction with other roadway construction. In the City of Williamsburg, Urban System funds can be used for bikeway facilities subject to the two percent match requirement applicable to all Urban System projects.

Other potential funding sources include funds from the National Park Service such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program. Some available state funding sources include grants through the Virginia Recreational Access Program and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Another potential source of funding and construction of bikeways is through the land development proffer system. During the consideration of development review cases such as special use permits and rezonings, a developer make “proffers” or offers to the jurisdiction (rezoning applications), or the jurisdiction may apply conditions (use permit applications) requiring certain things including the construction, or cash payments for needed public facilities such as sewer and water facilities, park land and bikeways. Similarly, the approval of site plans and subdivision plats along designated bike routes may be conditioned on the construction of bikeways along the frontage of the specific property. It is likely that some of the bikeways identified in this plan will be funded by developers as part of the development review process.

Annual Transportation Improvement Plan

Each year a four-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) is prepared for the Hampton Roads region. The TIP coordinates the development of transportation projects proposed throughout the region. The Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) works with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to develop the annual TIP. The Hampton Roads Metropolitan Organization is comprised of elected officials, managers, and transit administrators from every jurisdiction within the urbanized area of Hampton Roads. This body has the final regional approval authority over the annual TIP.

Each year, as part of the TIP development process, representatives from York County, the City of Williamsburg, and James City County will consider forwarding bikeway development projects together with other transportation requests for inclusion in the annual TIP. This regional coordination will increase the possibility that the competitive federal and state funds mentioned previously will become available to fund bikeways outlined in our regional plan.

Coordination with the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission

The Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) has developed a Regional Non-Highway Plan for the development of transit, sidewalk, trail, and bikeway facilities.

Williamsburg, James City and York have been active in the development of this plan, which includes the bikeways identified in this plan.

Coordination with the Virginia Department of Transportation

Each jurisdiction will continue to work with VDOT to ensure that the bikeways are constructed in an appropriate and timely fashion. The vast majority of the bikeways will be designed, constructed and maintained by VDOT or the City of Williamsburg. All bikeways maintained by VDOT must be within VDOT owned right-of-way. In addition, local engineers and planners will work with VDOT to ensure that bikeway construction will occur, wherever possible, as part of regularly scheduled roadway widening and improvement projects. Finally, VDOT will be encouraged to construct paved shoulders as part of all new road construction projects and to generally ensure that all local roadways are more “bicycle friendly.” As the edge of the pavement is particularly of concern to cyclists, VDOT and the City of Williamsburg will be requested to more actively maintain pavement edges along bikeways, especially shared roadway facilities. Furthermore, an attempt will be made to achieve an agreement with VDOT regarding the placement of pavement markers and roadside signage in order to reduce the potential for these important roadway safety features to be dangerous obstructions to cyclists.

Bikeways Brochure and Bikeway Safety Classes

As the Regional Bicycle Facilities Plan is implemented, and a number of bikeways are constructed in the region, a Bikeways Brochure will be created. This brochure will include information on suggested bike routes for day trips, intermodal transfer station locations and safety cycling guidelines. In addition, bicycle safety programs and tours may be sponsored by the local schools or recreation divisions.

Bicycle Advisory Committee

As with any plan, this Regional Bicycle Facilities Plan needs to be an evolving “living” plan which can be changed to respond to changing circumstances. The HTBAC, a 9-member regional bicycle advisory committee has been created and given the responsibility of overseeing implementation of the plan and keeping it up-to-date. Representation is included from the three governmental entities, Colonial Williamsburg and William and Mary. This advisory committee reports to the governing bodies of the three jurisdictions.

GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

GOAL

- To identify and develop a viable bikeway system within James City County, the City of Williamsburg and York County.

OBJECTIVES

- To provide an alternative mode of transportation and to increase recreational opportunities through bikeways development.
- To identify connections among automotive, transit, bicycle and pedestrian modes.
- To create interconnections of neighborhoods providing a safe pedestrian and bicycle oriented method of travel for children and adults.
- To enhance the region as a tourist destination.
- To foster energy conservation, reduced noise and air pollution, and motor vehicle traffic, and health and fitness improvement.
- To implement the bikeways-related strategies identified in the James City County, City of Williamsburg, and York County Comprehensive Plans.
- To minimize the local financial burden of bikeways construction wherever possible and practical.

STRATEGIES

- Develop a mixture of multi-use trails, shoulder bike lanes, and shared roadway facilities to accommodate the needs of bicycle enthusiasts of all age and ability levels including commuters, racers and family oriented cyclists.
- Develop, as demand dictates, several bicycle parking locations that will allow people to safely and conveniently transfer from one mode of transportation to another and use their bicycles for transportation purposes. Continue to adapt transit buses to carry bicycles.
- Work with the Virginia Department of Transportation to ensure that the bikeways are constructed or upgraded in an appropriate and timely fashion, and wherever possible, as part of regularly scheduled roadway widening and improvement projects. Shared roadway facilities should be automatically upgraded to shoulder bike lanes as part of such improvement projects.
- Facilitate the timely construction of bikeways in accordance with the priorities established by this plan.
- Provide a wider shoulder bike lane design than the minimum standard where bikeways are expected to accommodate a wide range of bicycle types.
- Ensure adequate maintenance of bikeways, including regular debris removal.

- Ensure that all roads and railroad crossings, whether a part of the proposed network or not, are constructed, improved or maintained in a manner to make them more bicycle friendly.
- Utilize Federal, State, Local and private funding sources for bikeways development.
- Work with the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and the Virginia Department of Transportation to ensure that bikeways are included as part of the annual Transportation Improvement Program.
- Develop regional bikeway brochures and maps to facilitate safe and convenient use of bikeways in the region. Encourage the creation of bikeway safety classes and locally sponsored biking tours.
- Encourage developers to include bikeways consistent with planned facilities as part of their developments, and further encourage them to provide connections to adjoining bikeways and other developments, both existing and future. Consideration should be given to authorizing bikeways which are designed to afford emergency access by emergency personnel, but preclude other forms of motorized vehicle travel.
- Continue efforts of James City County, the City of Williamsburg and York County to coordinate and implement a regional bicycle network, including further joint planning and development of regional funding proposals.