2009 Connecticut Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan

Connecticut Department of Transportation

Executive Summary

The 2009 Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan (Plan) provides direction for the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) in developing policy and pursuing initiatives to advance programs and projects to accommodate non-motorized transportation (bicycling, walking, and horse riding). The primary focus of the Plan's vision, goals, and strategies is to advance bicycling and walking as means of transportation, while recognizing their value for recreation and fitness. This Plan places special focus on state facilities, whose design and maintenance are the responsibility of CTDOT.

The Plan was prepared by Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. (Hartford, CT) with assistance from Alta Transportation + Design (Albany, NY) and Didona Associates (Danbury, CT). Federal and state funding was provided by the Federal Highway Administration and CTDOT.

This update of the Plan has been developed over an 18-month period, through an extensive public outreach and involvement process. The public outreach program of the Plan development entailed a number of components, including Plan Steering Committee participation and meetings, public meetings, other outreach meetings, intra-agency coordination, project newsletters, and the development and maintenance of a project website. In particular, the study team worked closely with the Plan Steering Committee and the general public to determine the vision, goals, and action strategies for bicycle and pedestrian planning in Connecticut.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning in Connecticut section, in Chapter I, provides a summary of the state of bicycle and pedestrian planning in Connecticut. It includes information on the bicycle and pedestrian components of various state, regional, and municipal plans as well as documents and mapping prepared by bicycle and pedestrian special interest and advocacy groups. Strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement of each plan or document are discussed. In addition, the Study Team completed a review of other states' bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts to assure that the development of the Plan is balanced and relevant. This included a review of other states' inclusions in plans and maps, as well as a more detail benchmarking review of seven states. The benchmarking review highlighted that Connecticut is conducting some bicycle and pedestrian planning items well, but could consider implementing practices that other states are doing.

Chapter II presents the vision, goals, and action strategies for bicycle and pedestrian planning in Connecticut. This vision and goals will be used by CTDOT over the coming years to guide bicycle and pedestrian planning initiatives in the state. The vision for bicycle and pedestrian planning in Connecticut is:

- To encourage and promote bicycling and walking throughout Connecticut by providing for the safe, convenient, and enjoyable use of these modes of transportation. Any person will be able to walk, bicycle, or use other types of non-motorized transportation modes safely and conveniently throughout the State.

- A network of on-road facilities and multiuse trails will connect towns, regions, and Connecticut to neighboring states. Specifically, residential areas, employment centers, shopping areas, transit centers, recreation and cultural attractions, and schools will accommodate the walking and bicycling needs of users,

In addition, potential implementation options are identified for each action strategy in Chapter II. The implementation options are specific courses of action, or recommendations, that CTDOT and

others can take to achieve the action strategies, goals, and vision. These implementation options are seen as recommendations in Chapters IV-VII of the Plan.

Chapter III provides an overview of benefits of and the demand for bicycling and walking in Connecticut. This chapter discusses the valuable characteristics of walking and bicycling. The demand analysis incorporates a variety of demand models to quantify usage of existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities as well as to estimate potential usage of new facilities. In addition, a number of models were used to quantify the benefits of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The models estimated the positive air quality, public health, transportation, and recreation benefits associated with existing and future bicycle travel in Connecticut.

Chapter IV discusses existing laws, agency policies, and other initiatives that encourage or impede bicycling and walking in the State of Connecticut. This chapter highlights the 3-foot passing law, which was adopted in 2008, as well as the Safe Routes to School program. In addition, internal and external agency coordination for bicycle and pedestrian planning are reviewed in this chapter. More than 20 recommendations related to laws, policies, and other initiative that can better encourage bicycling and walking are described in Chapter IV. These include such things as expanding education programs for non-motorized users, encouraging installation of bicycle parking facilities at private employment and retail facilities, and coordinating more closely with the State Traffic Commission to address and resolve bicycle and pedestrian issues.

Chapter V addresses bicycle and pedestrian safety in Connecticut. This section includes information on motor vehicle crashes that involve pedestrians and bicyclists for years 2005 through 2007. In addition, this section describes safety initiatives that various agencies are currently conducting, such as CTDOT's pilot safety awareness campaign. The chief components of the safety awareness campaign, launched in May 2009, include bus-mounted sign boards and radio announcements focusing on a "sharetheroadct" web site for related information. More than a dozen recommendations related to bicycle and pedestrian safety are described in Chapter V. These include such things as educating bicyclists and pedestrians on reporting of all crashes, and their locations and causes and developing a "Report and Issue" page on the bicycle and pedestrian website.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are discussed in Chapter VI. The bicycle and pedestrian facilities that are considered to have statewide significance, based on length and accessibility, are displayed in Chapter VI. In addition, this chapter lists the top bicycle and pedestrian improvements for each region. Representatives of each of the 15 regions have identified their most critical needs for bicycle and pedestrian improvements during the outreach process. Many of their desired improvements are regional or statewide. For example, a number of regional planning organizations cite a cross-state, multi-use trail network as their most desired improvement. These improvements are considered items of statewide significance and are described and mapped in Chapter VI.

Chapter VI also includes descriptions and maps of the cross-state routes and the 2009 Statewide Bicycle Map. As part of the Plan and Map update process, the Steering Committee and CTDOT identified a series of cross-state bicycle routes. These roadways are direct routes that can be used to travel across longer distances across and through the state. In the 2009 Statewide Bicycle Map, CTDOT determined to show more information regarding state roadways. A system was adopted assigning each segment of state roadway one of five classifications, called bicycle suitability, based on Average Daily Traffic and shoulder width. Generally, the suitability increases with wider shoulders, and lower traffic volumes. Presenting roadway information this way, rather than assigning recommended routes, allows each individual map user to select a route which is suited to his or her particular bicycling preferences and comfort level.

Nine recommendations related to bicycle and pedestrian facilities are described in Chapter VI. These include such things as conducting a site audit at state owned intermodal and Park & Ride facilities and increase signage of bicycle and pedestrian amenities at intermodal and Park & Ride facilities.

Chapter VII reviews existing bicycle and pedestrian project and program funding, as well as innovative strategies and recommendations for improvement. It includes a summary of the funding sources available and currently programmed in the STIP for bicycle and pedestrian projects throughout the state. Innovative funding strategies used in other states, such as Oregon's mandated one percent law and Marchaselli funds for local match used in New York State, are discussed. Eight recommendations related to bicycle and pedestrian funding are described in Chapter VII. These include such things as developing a more formal funding tracking mechanism and providing announcements of funding opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian projects.