

# *Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel*

## **Introduction**

Across the Country more people are enjoying the benefits of bicycling and walking. Recent opinion polls reported by the National Complete Streets Coalition found that 52 percent of Americans want to bicycle more, and 55 percent would like to drive less and walk more.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, studies have consistently shown that more than 70 percent of the nation's adults want their local transportation systems to incorporate accommodations for bicycling, walking and running.<sup>2</sup> In addition to offering a healthy and pollution-free alternative to motorized travel, facilities designed for bicycle and pedestrian travel can have a positive influence on local economies. Bikeways and sidewalk networks stimulate commercial activity, attract and revitalize businesses, create jobs, promote tourism and increase property values.

The renewed emphasis on bicycle and pedestrian travel in the United States is largely attributable to the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), which passed into Law in 1991. Unlike previous Federal transportation programs, ISTEA authorized approximately \$3 billion in Enhancement Program (Section 107) funds through 1996 for non-traditional highway projects (e.g., preservation of historical transportation facilities, landscaping, rails-to-trails programs and bicycle and pedestrian facilities) intended to "humanize" transportation systems and to improve their environmental aspects.<sup>3</sup> Bicycle and pedestrian projects have been the major benefactors of this funding source. By 1995, more than 2,300 projects selected for Section 107 funding (54 percent of the total allocation) were for bicycle and pedestrian facilities.<sup>4</sup> A significant share of the expenditures for Pinellas County's most prominent bicycle and pedestrian facility, the Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail, was funded through ISTEA.<sup>5</sup>

Historically, bicycle and pedestrian needs have not received due consideration in the construction of roadways and land development in Pinellas County. However, in recent years, Pinellas County, in cooperation with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), FDOT and the local governments, has made substantial progress toward elevating the importance of pedestrian and bicycle needs in the design and future plans of the County's transportation system.

## **Bicycle Planning**

A resurgence of bicycle activity in Pinellas County took hold in 1989 with the signing of a lease agreement between the County and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regarding a 35-mile abandoned CSX railroad line that would become the Pinellas Trail. The agreement placed responsibility for developing and maintaining the Trail with Pinellas County. The necessary financial support for the Trail came later that year when the Penny for Pinellas infrastructure sales tax was passed through voter referendum. The Penny for Pinellas sales tax has provided most of the funding spent on the development of the Trail as it currently exists (see Figure 4-1). The remaining funding included Federal revenue provided through ISTEA.

Serving over 700 thousand people on an annual basis, the Trail has been enormously popular among the County's residents and visitors. The Trail currently extends 34 miles from Tarpon Springs to St. Petersburg. Another 114 miles of State, County and municipal projects are scheduled for construction by 2010. It is important to note that more than 90 miles of these trail projects are facilities that connect to the Trail, thereby furthering the objective of the County to make bicycling and walking a more viable form of transportation for commuting as well as for recreational purposes throughout Pinellas County.

The blue print for the development of the Pinellas Trail and other community trails in Pinellas County is the MPO's Trailways Plan. The Trailways Plan, which is mirrored in Figure 4-1, identifies all the major off-road trail projects in the County. It's also used as a tool to prioritize these projects for Federal and State monies. To date, Pinellas County has played a primary role in the implementation of the Trailways Plan. The County has funded and constructed most of the Pinellas Trail as well as the Friendship Trail Bridge, Honeymoon Island and the Elfers and Fort DeSoto trails. In addition, the County is the primary agency responsible for the implementation of the critically important Progress Energy Trail, which began construction in Clearwater in 2006.

The Progress Energy Trail is the key link in the Pinellas Trail "Loop" which, upon completion, will provide a 75-mile uninterrupted trail facility that includes the original Pinellas Trail and that will connect nine cities as well as the unincorporated East Lake Tarpon and Palm Harbor areas. With the cooperation of other local governments as well as Progress Energy of Florida, Inc., Pinellas County has committed to completing the Loop in ten years. In May 2007, an estimate of \$80 million was presented by the County Planning Department to the Board of County Commissioners with the Board directing that opportunities (e.g., partnerships, project refinements, alternative alignments and alternative funding sources) be explored to reduce this cost. In addition to the Progress Energy Trail, there are 37.6 miles within the Loop that remain to be constructed.

With the Pinellas Trail Loop established as the backbone of the County's bicycle network, the County has looked to on-road facilities to further extend bicycle opportunities to more people. Pinellas County embarked on a major initiative to provide on-street accommodations for bicyclists with its adoption of Comprehensive Plan policies calling for the inclusion of striped four-foot bicycle lanes on road construction projects, where feasible, in November 1995 (Ordinance 96-31). In addition, the policies directed the County to consider provisions for bicycle lanes on existing facilities in the process of carrying out resurfacing projects. Striped bicycle lanes were included in the expansion of Sunset Point Road, from County Road 1 to US Highway 19, completed by the County in 1996. As a result, this facility became the first County arterial roadway with designated bicycle lanes. Since then, bicycle lanes have been installed on County facilities such as County Road 1, Belcher Road and Klosterman Road.

### ***Significant Factors Affecting Bicycling***

A survey of bicyclists in Eugene, Oregon; Portland, Oregon; Missoula, Montana; Seattle; and Denver; conducted by Design Ventures, Incorporated, noted several factors that weigh most heavily in the decision to use bicycles for commuting purposes. Route directness, safety and convenience were the factors cited most frequently.<sup>6</sup> For recreational purposes, bicyclists most often mention exercise and enjoyment as the primary motivating factors.<sup>7</sup>

Working in cooperation with the MPO's Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), Pinellas County seeks to address these factors primarily through the expansion of on-road and off-road bicycle facilities throughout the County. The objective of this approach is to provide a continuous network that allows commuters and recreational enthusiasts safe access to their destinations, including employment locations, shopping centers, restaurants, public parks, etc.

### ***Expansion of Bicycle Lanes in Pinellas County***

The County's approach to implementing on-road bicycle facilities on County jurisdictional roads revolves around the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). As mentioned previously, the County adopted Comprehensive Plan policies in 1995 that provided the basis for designating bicycle lanes on roads included in the CIP/CIE for improvement projects. In addition, roads scheduled in the CIP/CIE for re-surfacing include striped bicycle lanes, where feasible. Furthering the County's efforts is the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan, which supports the development of a countywide network of bicycle facilities through the course of implementing State and local government capital improvement programs.

### ***On-Site Bicycle Accommodations***

To a large extent, expanding opportunities for bicycle travel through a countywide network of on-road and off-road facilities provide a source of encouragement for increased bicycle travel. However, for commuting purposes, expanding the use of bicycles requires accommodations to be provided at destination points. For example, bicycle storage facilities are a necessity for people commuting to work, restaurants, or to shopping locations. The livable community code provisions that will be amended into the Land Development Code in 2009 will require new development to provide bicycle storage/parking areas.

## **Pedestrian Planning**

As with bicycle travel, Pinellas County recognizes the importance of providing a network of sidewalks to encourage and accommodate pedestrian activity. Sidewalk facilities in Pinellas County have undergone a major expansion in recent years. Penny revenue has been the catalyst for much of this expansion. Road improvements constructed since 1989 on County Road 611 (East Lake Road, McMullen Booth Road), 54th Avenue North, Alderman Road, Belcher Road, 118th Avenue and County Road 1 included new sidewalk facilities within the rights-of-way.

### ***Significant Factors Affecting Walking***

Since virtually everyone is a pedestrian, providing accommodations for people traveling by foot or wheelchair is essential to the transportation system of any community. Whether prompted by the need to exercise or to simply reach a destination, there are a number of factors that influence a person's desire to walk. Pinellas County channels its efforts on safety, coverage and convenience to encourage and accommodate pedestrian activity.<sup>8</sup>

As with bicycle facilities, Pinellas County's most active approach toward addressing the needs of pedestrians is the development of a continuous network of sidewalks throughout

the County. By increasing the coverage of sidewalks, more direct access is provided, thereby improving accommodations for pedestrians while encouraging more people to walk. Studies have shown that the availability of sidewalks in a neighborhood increase walking by 65 percent.<sup>9</sup> It should also be noted that sidewalks constructed by the County include wheelchair accommodations (i.e., ramps).

### ***Sidewalk Expansion in Pinellas County***

Pinellas County expands sidewalks through the application of its CIP/CIE, Site Plan Review Process and Concurrency Management System. All new road construction projects implemented through the CIP/CIE include sidewalks within the right-of-way. Roads that are scheduled for resurfacing are also evaluated for sidewalk improvements and they are constructed where feasible. In addition, the County has established a School Sidewalk Program, whereby sidewalk needs in proximity to schools are identified, prioritized and scheduled for construction. There is \$22.4 million budgeted for sidewalk construction in the FY 2007/08 CIP.

Through the Pinellas County Site Plan Review Process, development projects construct sidewalks along arterial and collector roads fronting the site in accordance with the Land Development Code. Development projects that are subject to the requirements of the Concurrency Management System may also construct sidewalk improvements as a transportation management plan (TMP) strategy. Under the provisions of the Concurrency Management System, development projects can implement TMP strategies, including sidewalk improvements, to increase allowable floor area/dwelling units.

Figures 4-2A, 4-2B and 4-2C show the locations of existing sidewalks and public schools in Pinellas County. The maps reveal areas where missing sections or “gaps” exist in the sidewalk network. Many of these gaps on major roads such as Ulmerton Road, Keystone Road, between US Highway 19 and East Lake Road, and Keene/Starkey Road will be alleviated following scheduled reconstruction projects on these facilities which will include sidewalk construction. However, even with these road building projects, many gaps will remain on major roads. There are currently 81 miles of sidewalk gaps along roads under the jurisdiction of Pinellas County. Table 4A list the County road segments where gaps of one mile or longer currently exist. The facility with the greatest length of sidewalk gaps is Anclote Boulevard from Anclote Road to Wesley Avenue with 6.8 miles.

**TABLE 4A  
COUNTY ROAD SIDEWALK GAPS**

<b>Road Name</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Mile(s)</b>
113th St N (CR 321)	91st Ter N	Walsingham Rd	1.8
126th Ave N (CR 346)	66th St N	US 19 N	1.3
131st St N/Vonn Rd (CR 263)	Walsingham Rd	82nd Ave N	3.5
142nd Ave N (CR 376)	Belcher Rd	US 19 N	1.6
28th St N (CR 683)	Gandy Access Rd	Roosevelt Blvd	4.2
49th St N (CR 611)	18th Ave N	38th Ave N	1.8
58th St N (CR 581)	147th Ave N	150th Ave N	2.1
62nd St N (CR 563)	126th Ave N	Roosevelt Blvd	2.1
86th Ave N (CR 264)	Oakhurst Rd	Seminole Blvd	1.2
98th St N (CR 373)	86th Ave N	102nd Ave N	1
Anclole Blvd (CR 994)	Anclole Rd	Wesley Ave	6.8
Beckett Wy (CR 429)/Dixie Hwy (CR 976)	US 19 A	US 19 N	1.8
Belleair Rd (CR 464)	US 19A	US 19 N	1.6
Florida Ave (CR 369)	Curlew Pl	Riverside Dr	1.8
Highland Ave (CR 375)	Gulf-to-Bay Blvd	Belleair Rd	2.7
Highlands Blvd (CR 547)	Ayr Dr	Carmichael St	1
Indian Rocks Rd (CR 233)	Wilcox Rd	8th Ave SW	1.9
Keystone Rd (CR 582)	Hillsborough Co Line	Whispering Lakes Blvd	4.1
Lake Ave (CR 385)	McMullen Rd	Gulf-to-Bay Blvd	2.2
Mehlenbacher Rd (CR 432)	20th St NW	Clearwater Largo Rd	1.2
Oakhurst Rd (CR 233)	102nd Ave N	94th Pl N	1.4
Old Coachman Rd (CR 535)	Gulf-to-Bay Blvd	Sunset Point Rd	2.2
Park St (CR 1)	22nd Ave N	Country Club Rd N	1.2
Ridge Rd (CR 313)	81st Pl N	Walsingham Rd	2.8
Riverside Dr/N Spring Blvd (CR 936)	Tarpon Dr	Tarpon Ave	1.1
San Martin Blvd (CR 823)	Bridge	Gandy Blvd	2.9
Trinity Blvd (CR 996)	East Lake Rd	Pasco County Line	3.6
Union St (CR 600)	US 19A	Patricia Ave	1.1
Virginia Ave/Beltrees St (CR 618)	Keene Rd	Hercules Ave	1
Wilcox Rd (CR 352)	Indian Rocks Rd	Pine St	1.4

Note:

1. Includes only those facilities with gaps one mile or greater.
2. Miles column identifies length of sections where gaps exist.

The County is currently working with the MPO and other local governments to update the MPO's sidewalk inventory and to continue identifying remaining gaps along arterial, collector and local streets that need attention. Pinellas County will tap existing sidewalk funds as well as monies earmarked from the most recent Penny extension for these remaining gaps in County jurisdictional rights-of-way.

Another important issue related to sidewalk expansion in the County is landscaping. In the hot climate of Florida, people will be discouraged from walking in areas where they face direct sunlight. Consequently, due consideration needs to be given to providing shady areas for pedestrians. This will be addressed through the development of the livable community provisions for the County Land Development Code in 2009.

### ***On-Site Pedestrian Accommodations***

Another area of pedestrian planning that the County is focusing on concerns “on-site” accommodations for pedestrians seeking access to and from developed properties, particularly those occupied by commercial and office uses. Many of the busiest commercial and office centers in the County are oriented toward the back of the property and do not have facilities inviting to pedestrian traffic (e.g., separated sidewalks/crosswalks extending through parking areas to the buildings). With the buildings set away from the street, and in the absence of clearly marked and/or separated pedestrian ways, people are discouraged from walking to the site.<sup>10</sup> Lack of pedestrian facilities also adversely impact the bus passenger seeking to access the site from a proximate bus stop.

For pedestrians who choose to navigate through a parking area lacking a clearly marked walkway, the primary concern becomes one of safety. This concern is magnified when considering the needs of physically-handicapped and/or elderly individuals whose ability to navigate these areas may be limited. The livable community land development code provisions will include requirements for on-site pedestrian accommodations such as buffered crosswalks and sidewalks through the site plan review process.

### **Encouragement of Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel through Concurrency Management**

Pinellas County also provides opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian initiatives to occur through the Concurrency Management System. Developers proposing projects within concurrency corridors can exceed floor area/dwelling unit restrictions imposed by the concurrency management system through the implementation of transportation management plan (TMP) strategies. The strategies are intended to minimize the impacts of development and to improve mobility within the corridors. They include bicycle and sidewalk facility improvements and employee-sponsored initiatives to encourage workers to commute to the office by modes other than driving alone. On-site pedestrian improvements involving separated walkways and/or sidewalk connections from bus stops to proximate buildings are also utilized as TMP strategies. In addition, the MPO-sponsored corridor strategy plans evaluate opportunities to encourage alternative transportation modes such as bicycling and walking.

## Endnotes

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### **Chapter 4**

1. [www.completestreets.org/faq.html](http://www.completestreets.org/faq.html), 2005.
2. National Bicycle and Pedestrian Clearinghouse Technical Assistance Series, "The Economic and Social Benefits of Off-Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities," Number 2, September 1995, p. 1.
3. Lisa Wormser, "Enhancements: Getting Up To Speed," Planning, September 1995, p.10.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
5. ISTEA was replaced in 1998 by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA 21), which furthered ISTEA's emphasis on "multi-modal" transportation planning, continuing to provide funding for bicycle and pedestrian oriented projects.
6. Design Ventures, Inc., Montgomery County Growth Policy Study--Interim Report, (Denver: 1989).
7. Federal Highway Administration Publication-92--041, The National Bicycling and Walking Case Study No. 1: Reasons Why Bicycling and Walking Are and Are Not Being Used More Extensively as Travel Modes, (Washington, D.C., 1993), p. 18.
8. A Federal Highway Administration study conducted in 1992 cited these factors among others as being the most significant in individual decisions to walk. Federal Highway Administration Publication, The National Bicycling and Walking Case Study No. 4: Measures To Overcome Impediments To Bicycling and Walking, (Washington, D.C., 1993), p. 59, 60.
9. [Completestreets.org](http://Completestreets.org), 2004.
10. William H. Whyte, City - Rediscovering the Center, (Doubleday: New York, 1988), p. 129.