

# The Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Oregon has demonstrated biking and walking as viable and desirable modes of transportation. In addition to the people who bike or walk today, changing generational and demographic preferences show growing interest and utilization of biking and walking routes, from younger generations wanting an array of transportation choices, to Oregonians aging in place that need to walk to medical facilities or other destinations. These modes play an essential role in moving people short to moderate distances, providing travel options and supporting recreational travel, while also benefiting health and the economy.

### 1. Introduction

Oregon boasts one of the highest biking and walking rates in the nation<sup>1</sup> and while the majority of travel is by automobile, many people rely on walkways and bikeways to travel to and from home, school, and work; or to access shopping, downtowns, critical services, or other destinations. Individuals who do not drive often depend on biking or walking to meet their daily needs. For some, biking and walking are the only affordable means of travel to get to work and other destinations. Even those who do not report biking or walking as their primary means of travel may still use these modes to make critical connections in a trip, such as ride to the nearest bus stop or walk from where they've parked to their destination. These examples illustrate why biking and walking are essential and integral components of Oregon's multi-modal transportation system.

More than essential modes of travel, biking and walking can contribute to personal, regional, and statewide benefits. Bikeways and walkways contribute to Oregon's economy by helping people access jobs and businesses. In addition, walking and biking opportunities attract Oregonians, and others alike, to travel across the state to enjoy Oregon's scenic beauty and tourist destinations. Travelers and other visitors bring economic opportunity from tourist spending to industries that support such travel. Societal benefits can also be achieved from these carbon neutral modes and result in improved public health for those choosing physically active means of travel. These and other benefits are described further in Chapter 2, and help to describe why biking and walking are important modes of transportation.

It is important to assess the changing needs for biking and walking, as these are integral components of the transportation system, and recognize the challenges for those currently, or interested in, using the biking and walking system. Oregon has built a strong biking and walking network and culture which has resulted in increased use, and while Oregon is a leader among its peers, there are still issues, barriers, and opportunities for biking and walking which are explored in this Plan.

A primary issue of concern is safety. Recent data indicates that fatalities and serious injuries for bicyclists, and especially for pedestrians, have increased.<sup>2</sup> A number of factors contribute to these safety issues, requiring a new look and approach to help move Oregon towards the elimination of biking and walking deaths and serious injuries.<sup>3</sup> In addition to crashes, safety issues and perceptions of safety or security play a role in the number of people choosing to walk or bike. People's comfort level using biking and walking facilities often varies depending on the speed of adjacent traffic, roadway characteristics,

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<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey (more detail here)

<sup>2</sup> USDOT. Safer People, Safer Streets: Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Initiative. <http://www.transportation.gov/policy-initiatives/ped-bike-safety/safer-people-safer-streets-pedestrian-and-bicycle-safety>.

<sup>3</sup> This language is consistent with 'Vision Zero – Toward Zero Deaths' referring to the goal of zero traffic injuries and fatalities. <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/tzd/> (cite actual language)

and degree of separation from motor vehicle traffic, among other factors.<sup>4</sup> A significant portion of Oregonians are thought to be interested in biking, but concerned about safety, availability of facilities, or other issues.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, there is a need to reexamine biking and walking from a systematic standpoint. The majority of bicycle and pedestrian facilities share the public right-of-way with cars, freight trucks, and other vehicles. To ensure safety for all modes, it is important to consider the interaction between them and to strive for a seamless transportation system that minimizes conflicts.

This seamless system should also consider the connections between biking and walking facilities and other modes to improve access and provide travel choices. Throughout the biking and walking network there are often existing gaps that prevent these connections to other modes and destinations; therefore, system investments should strive for continuity, providing easy transitions from one network to the next. Biking and walking trips often cross invisible boundaries of ownership. A user may take a city's neighborhood greenway to a sidewalk or bike lane on a state highway and then, to a county trail, unaware that ownership of their route changed.

As benefits and challenges are recognized, the State can determine how to best achieve a more safe and efficient bicycle and pedestrian system, through priority setting, partnerships, and strategic investment. The ***Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*** sets the policy foundation that will guide decisions and support implementation for biking and walking over the next 20 years.

## 2. Overview of the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

The Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan provides a decision-making framework for biking and walking efforts in the State within the context of the overall transportation system. It is part of a suite of statewide policy plans, under the Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP), that facilitate an integrated and interconnected transportation system to meet the diverse and changing needs of Oregon (see sidebar). The policies and strategies herein direct the work of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and guide a variety of entities throughout the state. Local, regional, and state agencies all have important roles in implementing the Plan and achieving its vision. Regional and local plans must be consistent with the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan policies and strategies.

*The Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan encapsulates the bike and walk modal elements of the Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP). The policies and strategies in this plan are written to refine the OTP and be consistent with the other mode and topic plans, such as the Oregon Highway Plan (OHP). For example, while the OHP has policies and strategies directing driveway distances, this Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan enhances those policies by suggesting that sidewalk elevation changes be minimized at driveway locations. In this way, the suite of mode and topic plans under the OTP compliment and build upon one another and provide comprehensive policy direction for the State.*

The Plan examines biking and walking from an infrastructure and user perspective, recognizing issues, opportunities, and needs. It is inclusive of all aspects of delivering a transportation system, including policies and strategies that cover planning, investing, constructing, and maintaining biking and walking

<sup>4</sup> This is reflected in the MMLoS methodology, Level of Traffic Stress analysis, as well as pedestrian level of comfort indices in the research (2010 Highway Capacity Manual, Mineta Transportation Institute, 2012, Marshall & Garrick, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> This concept was originally proposed based on a study in Portland, OR ([http://web.pdx.edu/~jdill/Types\\_of\\_Cyclists\\_PSUWorkingPaper.pdf](http://web.pdx.edu/~jdill/Types_of_Cyclists_PSUWorkingPaper.pdf)) and has been demonstrated by a national survey, which found that 53% of adults want to bike more (<http://www.peopleforbikes.org/pages/u.s.-bicycling-participation-benchmarking-report>).

facilities and programs. The plan recognizes that Oregon is a geographically large and diverse state, with communities ranging from small coastal cities, rural counties in Eastern Oregon, and the urbanized metropolitan areas in the Willamette Valley. Policies and strategies are intended to apply across contexts, although some are likely to be more appropriate for some contexts than others. When fully implemented, the Plan envisions a future in which Oregon builds on the foundation of today and increases biking and walking connections to critical destinations and to other modes, brings about a safer system, enhances access for all users, and leverages opportunities to enhance the system.

Specifically by 2035, the Plan envisions that:

*“In Oregon, people of all ages, incomes, and abilities can access destinations in urban and rural areas on safe, well-connected biking and walking routes. People can enjoy Oregon’s scenic beauty by walking and biking on a transportation system that respects the needs of its users and their sense of safety. Bicycle and pedestrian networks are recognized as integral, interconnected elements of the Oregon transportation system that contribute to our diverse and vibrant communities and the health and quality of life enjoyed by Oregonians.”*

The Plan establishes nine goal areas that support the vision, they include: (1) Safety; (2) Accessibility and Connectivity; (3) Mobility and Efficiency; (4) Community and Economic Vitality; (5) Equity; (6) Health; (7) Sustainability; (8) Strategic Investment; and (9) Coordination, Cooperation and Collaboration. These nine goal areas are described in Chapter 3: Policies and Strategies.

ODOT developed the Plan through extensive stakeholder involvement and public outreach. A Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) was formed to guide the process and review plan content. The 17 member PAC was comprised of high-level elected officials and industry representatives across the state, including statewide, urban, suburban, and rural interests. Similar diversity was included on a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for the Plan, which included regional and local transportation agency staff and other practitioners. The public outreach and involvement included state-wide listening meetings, surveys, and interviews to inform policy development; presentations to the Area Commissions on Transportation (ACT); and a formal public review period of the draft plan. These consultation and public involvement processes are further detailed in Appendix X: Public Involvement.

### 3. Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Outline

The Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan consist of the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction**
- **Chapter 2: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities**
- **Chapter 3: Policies and Strategies**
- **Chapter 4: Investment Considerations**
- **Chapter 5: Implementation Considerations**

Additionally, the Plan includes appendices for further Plan background, research, and documentation of consistency with state requirements.