

4

CURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS & POLICIES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



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4.0 INTRODUCTION

While the engineering and programming recommendations described in this Plan are critical for creating safe routes to school, strong pedestrian-oriented plans, policies, and regulations are also key elements of a complete SRTS program. These plans and policies help ensure that pedestrian and bicycle-friendly facilities are implemented with new development. Also, school system policies such as busing, school siting, and wellness policies are essential for making it safer and for encouraging more walking and bicycling to school.

This chapter contains existing plan and policy reviews with recommended policy revisions and amendments. The recommended policy statements will help the community and its schools achieve its vision of becoming more walkable and bikable. Town planning staff and school leaders should become familiar with these policies and regulations to ensure the full suite of policy tools are used and enforced.

Walkability should be an item considered with all future development, growth, and school siting decisions. More people will walk when their proximity to key destinations is reasonable. For example, a mixed use development near a school will engage more walking while the development of a school at the outskirts of Town will promote less walking and more driving.

This section is divided into the following components:

- Town/County Policy/Existing Plan Review
- Town Policy Recommendations
- School/District Policies
- School/District Policy Recommendations

4.1 TOWN/COUNTY POLICIES/EXISTING PLAN REVIEW

Carrboro Vision 2020 (2000)

This is a policy-making document informed by citizen input to craft future policies that reflect the visions and will of the community. It is divided into several components including programming, development, economic development, transportation, environmental protection, and housing. The Town wants to maintain its character and protect its natural environment.

Key policies affecting this bicycle and pedestrian planning effort are pulled directly from the document below.

1.1 Recreation and Parks

1.11 The Town should encourage and support the development of greenways and parklands dedicated to public use along streams and easements. There should be a network of connected greenways throughout the Town. These greenways should serve as nature trails, bicycling and walking trails, wildlife corridors. All should protect our natural environment.

1.14 The Town should practice and encourage ecologically sound and sustainable maintenance of open space, including parks and greenways.

4.3 Bicycle and pedestrian traffic

4.31 The Town should fully implement its bicycle and pedestrian network plan. This plan should identify links needed now as well as links that will be needed by 2020.

4.32 The Town should establish connections with bicycle and pedestrian ways in other jurisdictions.

4.33 The maintenance of these paths and ways should continue to be a high priority.

4.4 Established Roads

4.41 As a general policy, established roads should be widened to accommodate bicycle lanes and sidewalks, but not to provide additional lanes for automobiles.

4.5 New Development

4.51 The Town should continue to require developers to install sidewalks and bicycle paths in new development.

4.52 New developments should bear the costs of upgrading connector and arterial facilities in the areas adjacent to their properties to the extent appropriate, including upgrades to serve pedestrians and bicycle, given the added load to the infrastructure and anticipated use of facilities.

5.30 Open Space, Greenways, and Natural Areas

5.31 Carrboro should work to preserve open space and greenway through all available means, such as direct purchase, conservation easements, donations, and federal and state grants.

5.32 The Town should map a connected series of greenways that are large enough to serve as wildlife corridors.

Town of Carrboro Residential Traffic Management Plan for Speed and Traffic Control (Revised 2006)

One of the goals of traffic calming measures is to provide alternative transportation modes in order to reduce automobile traffic. In determining areas to install traffic calming measures, bicycle volume is a measurement that is taken into account. Points are given for each 10 pedestrian and cyclist on roads with and without sidewalks or bicycle lanes. Additional 5 to 1, depending on distance, points are given to the proximity of a pedestrian trip generator.

Carrboro Downtown Design Guidelines

The majority of this document addresses planning issues from an urban design standpoint, but there is some mention of Carrboro's pedestrian and bicycle facilities needing improvement which ties in directly with SRTS.

First, for pedestrians, it mentions that the downtown area should be a connected network of sidewalks at least 8 feet wide with landscaping buffers. Next, it mentions the importance of narrow driveways, curb ramps on each corner, and improved intersection crossings throughout Town, and attractive efficient lighting along walkways.

First, for bicyclists, it is mentioned as essential to provide a continuous, connected bicycle network through Town. In order to reduce the conflict that already exists between automobiles, bikes and pedestrians, the plan suggests clearly identifying bicycle networks for the user in addition to providing a system complete with no gaps. The plan goes on

to address the need for bicycle traffic to be encouraged on the downtown streets by providing separate lane systems and bicycle racks at points where bicyclists change modes of transportation. "Bicycle racks need to be located close to all centers of business, public buildings, places of public assembly, bus stops and so on. They should be located near major entrances and marked for easy visibility."

The design guidelines recommend that the existing system be modified and expanded to achieve separation from pedestrian facilities, clear demarcation, the furthest route possible and a relationship to downtown buildings, which include bicycle racks near the main entrances.

Recreation and Parks Comprehensive Master Plan Update (2006)

The purpose of this Plan is to evaluate existing recreational facilities and guide the Town in meeting the community's future recreational needs. An inventory of facilities and programs was developed along with recommendations and funding guidance. A thorough public input process occurred. Public response indicated that the most popular recreational activities were walking, bicycling, swimming, hiking, and running/jogging (in that order). Since four out of the five top responses involved activities that take place on bicycle paths, trails, and greenways, these are a high priority for the Carrboro community.

Some of the top goals of this Plan include the acquisition and construction of greenway trail and bicycle path facilities. Focus areas include Bolin Creek (extending from Martin Luther King Jr. Road to Estes Drive Extension, then to Homestead Road) and Morgan Creek (from Culbreth Road/Highway 15-501 to Smith Level Road at Frank Porter Graham School.) Also emphasized is the desire to link greenway trail development in Chapel Hill and the future construction of the Twin Creeks Park and Educational Campus and Carolina North projects. Another goal presented is connectivity to regional systems such as the American Tobacco Trail and Chatham County.

In addition to greenway development, an emphasis was placed on programming to promote and educate residents on the benefits, health, and safety of walking and bicycling. Programming should reach all user groups, including Latino populations.

A significant portion of this Master Plan update discusses the types of greenways, acquisition strategies, and design guidelines for greenways. The Plan describes six types of greenways that may be developed:

Type 1: No Facility Development (Natural state green corridors for conservation purpose)

Type 2: Low Impact/Limited Development (Natural trail surface 4-6 feet wide)

Type 3: Multi-use Unpaved Trail Development (Compacted crushed stone, minimum of 8 feet wide)

Type 4: Multi-use Paved Trail Development (Asphalt or concrete, minimum of 10 feet wide)

Type 5: On-road Facilities (Sidewalks at 5- foot minimum and bicycle lanes at 4 feet minimum)

Type 6: Mountain Bike Facilities (Off-road unpaved corridor for mountain bicycling, minimum 6 feet wide)

1989 Town of Carrboro Bicycle and Sidewalk Policies

This plan identifies major objectives in the interest of both pedestrian and bicycle facilities:

Pedestrian:

The Town's major objective is to provide safe pedestrian access to every point within the Town limits. There are three levels of priority, listed in descending order:

1. Connect the existing pedestrian system with major community facilities such as schools, Town Hall, and the Downtown.
2. Expand the system to connect high density area.
3. Connect lower density developments with the existing system.

Bicycle:

Increase safety of bicycle riders in Town by creating a series of separate facilities:

1. Complete separation of motor traffic from bicycle traffic.
 2. Designated bikelanes on major streets such as Weaver Street, Jones Ferry Rd., Greensboro St., Main St. and Hillborough Rd.
 3. Shared roadways on less traveled residential streets
 - Access to major destination points
1. Connect existing bicycle system with major community facilities such as schools, Town Hall, and the Downtown, including the University.
 2. The system should expand to connect high density areas. An example of such an area is the apartment communities on Smith Level Road and BPW Road.

3. Lower density developments should be connected with the existing system.

Taken directly from the text, policy requirements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities include:

Pedestrian:

EXISTING STREETS

Consideration will be given to construction of sidewalks on all existing arterial and collector streets. Sidewalk construction by the Town will be part of the Town's Capital Improvements Program.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Whenever new development is approved, in order to adequately serve the residents or patrons of the development, sidewalks shall be constructed along existing roads where there is no existing sidewalk along the new development's frontage to allow the development to connect to the existing sidewalk network.

NEW STREETS

Sidewalks in new developments will be required to be constructed on the following types of streets, as classified in Section 15-210(b) of the Carrboro Land Use Ordinance:

Classification Requirement:

- Minor - None
- Local - One Side
- Subcollector - One Side
- Collector - One Side
- Arterial - Both Sides

Bicycle:

EXISTING STREETS

Consideration will be given to construction of bicycle lanes on all existing arterial and collector streets. An off-road bicycle path may be built in place of on-road facilities if it is determined that bicycle travel would be better served by a separate facility.

To adequately serve the residents or patrons of a new development, existing roads shall be widened to accommodate bicycle lanes along the frontage to allow the development to connect to the existing bicycle network.

NEW ARTERIAL AND COLLECTOR STREETS

Bicycle lanes shall be required to be constructed on all new arterial and collector streets, as classified in Section 15-210(b) of the Carrboro Land Use Ordinance.

As motor vehicle traffic and speeds on subcollectors, local and minor streets are low, and combining motor vehicle

and bicycle traffic would not create a safety hazard on these streets, no on-road bicycle lanes will be required.

CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS

The following presumptive standards shall apply unless modifies in a particular case by the permit issuing authority in light of environmental or other public welfare considerations.

1. On road bikelanes shall be constructed to the same standards as the motor vehicle portion of the pavement. Most bikelanes in Carrboro are five (5) feet in width.
2. Off-road facilities shall be constructed according to standards in AASHTO Guide for Development of New Bicycle Facilities.

Town of Carrboro Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan 2009

The Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan provides ample support and recommendations for the SRTS program and action plan. This Plan recommends the implementation of an additional 54 miles of bicycle facilities, including paved shoulders, bicycle lanes, sharrows, side-paths, intersection improvements and off-road trails. Many of these recommendations are directly tied or near the schools this action plan is studying and has been utilized in the SRTS Action Plan recommendations. A few relevant excerpts from the plan are below:

“Carrboro will be a place that is bicycle-friendly; where people have an accessible, safe, and convenient option of bicycling for transportation, recreation, and health; where bicycle lanes and greenways provide a connected system within and outside the Town; where future development provides access and facilities for bicyclists; where bicycle transportation is the easy choice; and where proposed policies and programs educate, inspire, and encourage residents and enforce safe bicyclist and motorist behavior.”

- To have bicycling as a viable transportation alternative throughout the Town and for all trip purposes.
- A continuing process for reviewing, updating, and implementing bicycle-related policies.
- A robust comprehensive bicycle program that incorporates engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation programs.
- A safe and accessible network of bicycle facilities.

School Programs

Many programs, such as Safe Routes to School, exist to aid communities in developing safer bicycle and pedestrian facilities around schools. Programs can be adopted by parents or the schools to provide initiatives for walking or bicycling. Information is available to encourage group travel, prevent bicycle and pedestrian-related injuries, and sponsor commuter-related events. Carrboro can develop and implement action plans for all schools to participate in these programs and later apply for funding. The Safe Routes to School program also provides implementation and construction funding for facilities near schools.

After-school programs, summer bicycle camps, and Family Fun Rides can be created to provide a supportive environment for children to learn how to ride a bicycle comfortably and safely with friends, learn how to repair and maintain a bicycle, and tour their city and its destinations.

2005 Mobility Report Card

This plan documents existing vehicle circulation and transportation modes in the Town of Carrboro and specifically in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities sections, examines patterns of improvement, types of facilities, and pedestrian and bicycle activity.

Existing networks are closely inventoried and mapped over the course of two years with the results presented in different figures and charts throughout the document. Carrboro’s existing pedestrian network is average from a transit standpoint but is lacking from a residential standpoint. Several sidewalk networks need to be added to increase connectivity with neighborhoods and destinations.

The pedestrian and bicycle paths in the downtown area such as the Libba Cotten Bikeway and the Francis Shetley Bikepath were described as having a very high volume of activity with some of the highest counts in Carrboro being taken on the Libba Cotton Bikeway during a 12-hour period.

The 2005 Mobility Report Card concludes the document by pointing out that mobility is highest in downtown Carrboro.

2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (2005, DCHC MPO)

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHCMPO) has set a goal to create a “pedestrian and bicycle system that provides alternative trans-

portation, allows greater access to public transit, and supports recreational opportunities.” Furthermore, the MPO strives towards the development of “a safe, accessible and convenient network of regional bicycle and pedestrian routes.” On a regional level, the Transportation Advisory Committee adopted a policy of inclusion for pedestrian and bicycle projects in all roadway improvement projects. In addition to facility improvements, the MPO created recommendations for education, enforcement, and encouragement (to provide incentive to get more people bicycling and walking). For the Town of Carrboro, the Plan recommends a total of 22 projects (17 miles) at an estimated cost of \$4.8 million.

Orange County Bicycle Transportation Plan 1999

This extensive bicycle plan addresses facilities on a more expansive scale, including the towns of Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and the City of Durham. The plan’s introductory goals include providing rural areas with routes that access urban areas within and adjacent to Orange County as well as addressing current facilities by providing increased connectivity between these urban areas. The plan has outlined goals and objectives for achieving successful bicycle facilities:

- Construct bicycle facilities in Orange County that will make cycling for transportation purposes safer, more convenient, and more efficient.
- Widen travel lanes to 12 feet and provide paved shoulders.
- Change state and regional bicycle transportation policies and programs.
- Dedicate funding for better surfacing, maintenance, and signage.
- Establish a Bicycle Advisory Committee at the local and regional levels.
- Provide intersection improvements and treatments including bicycle pavement markings and “bicycle sensitive” traffic signal actuators 2. Increase safety on Orange County bicycle transportation routes.
- Provide education for adults and children bicyclists and drivers.
- Improve cycling routes by providing route mapping.
- Target illegal cyclist and motorist behavior and enforce rights regarding NC law.

- Provide accurate accident reporting.
- Assess implementation with performance measures (measures being annual number of miles of road lanes widened to 12 feet and number of miles of 4 foot shoulders constructed; also the number of persons attending the cyclist skills and traffic education courses.

DCHC MPO Regional Priority List for Bicycle and Pedestrian (Division 7 - Orange County)

A top priority project list exists for bicycle and pedestrian improvements specifically. The ones pertinent to this effort include:

- Old Fayetteville Road (McDougle School to NC 54) - Bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
- Homestead Road (NC 86 to High School Road) - Bicycle lanes and sidewalks.
- Estes Drive Extension (N Greensboro Street to Carrboro Town limits) - Multi-use path from Williams Street to Estes Drive. Add bicycle lanes, sidewalks to both sides of the road. Project connects to wide shoulders on Estes Drive.
- Southern Railway Greenway (Estes Drive to Seawell School Road).
- Old NC 86 (Hillsborough to Homestead) - Bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
- BPW Club Road/Westbrook Drive Greenway.
- Old NC 86 (Eubanks to I-40) - Bicycle lanes.
- Old NC 86 (Homestead to Eubanks - Bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
- Eubanks (Old NC 86 to Rogers) - Bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Town of Carrboro Land Use Ordinance

As shown in the excerpts below, the Town of Carrboro’s Land Use Ordinance supports safe pedestrian and bicycle transportation and development. While these policies could be strengthened, such as requiring bicycle facilities such as parking and bicycle lanes at all new development, they provide a good foundation and support for Safe Routes to School.

The sidewalks required by this section shall be at least five feet wide and constructed with concrete according to the specification set forth in Appendix C, except that the permit

issuing authority may permit the installation of walkways constructed with mortarless laid brick pavement according to specifications set forth in Appendix C when it concludes that:

- (1) Such walkways shall serve the residents of the development as adequately as concrete sidewalks; and
- (2) Such walkways shall be more environmentally desirable or more in keeping with the overall design of the development.
- (h) Whenever the permit issuing authority finds that a means of pedestrian access is necessary from the subdivision to schools, parks, playgrounds, or other roads or facilities and that such access is not conveniently provided by sidewalks adjacent to the streets, the developer may be required to reserve an unobstructed easement of at least ten feet in width to provide such access.
- (i) In subdivision developments that abut a public street, sidewalks shall be constructed adjacent to such street if a sidewalk in that location is required by the officially adopted Town sidewalk master plan. Whenever possible, such sidewalk shall be constructed within the public right-of-way.
- (j) The sidewalks required by this section along streets with curb and gutter shall be constructed with a planting strip at least three feet in width, unless the permit-issuing authority allows the strip to be omitted or constructed at a lesser width upon a finding that such deviation from the presumptive standard is warranted to avoid environmental damage or to promote public safety. For purposes of this subsection, a planting strip shall mean a strip of land located between the back of the curb and the walkway. Such planting strips shall be planted with grass or other-wise landscaped.

4.2 TOWN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Town should consider adopting a complete streets policy which requires that the planning, design, construction and maintenance of roadway and transit facilities will include the needs of all transportation users – pedestrians, bicyclists, the disabled, transit users, and motorists. Complete streets improve safety by providing dedicated facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. As such this is an important strategy for Safe Routes to School, as children are our most vulnerable roadway users, and roads leading to schools are regularly built and reconstructed.
- The Town should consider utilizing a portion of the revenue from traffic fines for SRTS. When drivers speed and commit other moving violations, especially in areas where there

are vulnerable populations such as school zones, they endanger children. Therefore, it is rational that the fine revenue generated should be used for programs that increase safety. Safe Routes to School programs calm traffic and reduce the number of vehicles driven by parents in school zones and other places where children may be walking or bicycling to school. Utilizing fine-based revenues creates a permanent and appropriate way to fund SRTS programs within the Town or County. For examples of fine-based SRTS programs, visit: <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/state/bestpractices/finebasedfunding>

- The Town should enhance its 1989 Bicycle and Sidewalk Policy to require sidewalks be built on **both** sides of new subcollector and collector roads.

4.3 SCHOOL/DISTRICT POLICIES

Chapel Hill-Carrboro School Policies:

A number of existing policies support walking and bicycling to school. However, as shown in Section 4.4, these policies can still be strengthened to support the goals of SRTS.

Busing Policy

Bus Route Policy Code: 6321

Excerpts: *“Students who live at least 1.5 miles from their assigned schools ordinarily will be assigned to a bus which passes within at least one mile of the student’s residence. Students must be at their designated bus stop at the time of bus arrival.”*

“A student who is identified as having special needs following procedures in the North Carolina Procedures Governing Programs and Services for Children with Special Needs will be provided with transportation services as required by law.”

Wellness Policy

Wellness Policy Code: 3541/6140/7245

II. Physical Activity and Fitness

Excerpts: *“The Board promotes health and fitness through physical education instruction and additional opportunities for physical activity. Regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence improves strength and endurance, helps build healthy bones and muscles, enhances learning, increases self-esteem, develops socialization, and reduces anxiety and stress. Physical activity practices established during childhood promote life-long healthy habits, and reduce the risk of developing obesity and related chronic illness such as cardiovascular disease and Type II Diabetes.”*

School Siting Policy

Site Selection Policy Code: 9010

Excerpts: *“The board will select future school sites in a manner consistent with facility needs as identified in the Capital Investment Plan. The board will consider options for acquiring property and buildings that are within its legal authority, are economically sound and meet immediate and future needs.”*

“The superintendent will assist the board in site selection. In making recommendations to the board, the superintendent will consider the following factors, along with any other factors the superintendent determines to be appropriate:

- *The size of the site needed for current and future needs;*
- *The cost for acquisition and development;*
- *Suitability for intended uses of the site;*
- *Accessibility for students and the community;*
- *Whether the site meets all legal requirements, including environmental standards;*
- *Partnerships with private and public developers to acquire donated sites.”*

Policy Code: 9040 High Performance Building Design Criteria

Excerpts: *“The Board of Education supports the construction of school facilities that are designed to be cost-efficient, durable and sensitive to the environment. High Performance Schools (HPS) are designed to improve the learning environment while saving energy, materials and natural resources.”*

“Regulations

2.5 Alternative Transportation

- *Locate building within 1/2 mile of an existing or planned trail, greenway, bikeway or bus line*
- *Provide bicycle racks and storage for 10% of the building occupants if appropriate*
- *Provide preferred parking for carpools and alternative vehicles*
- *Provide easy bicycle and pedestrian access to the building site”*

4.4 CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO SCHOOL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The above-mentioned policies should be strengthened in order to support the goals of SRTS.

Busing Policy

The school system should maintain its policy that provides transportation for students who live 1.5 miles or further from school. This encourages children and families to walk or bicycle to school. However, this policy is not always enforced and busing occurs within 1.5 miles of the schools. This is sometimes due to a lack of contiguous pedestrian facilities or the presence of major roadway crossings. In these cases, as safety is improved along these walking routes, children and families should be required to walk. Safety may be addressed through the addition of sidewalks, safe crossing facilities, and crossing guards.

Wellness Policy

The wellness policy addresses the importance of regular physical activity for overall health. However, the policy should be revised to include language about SRTS and how walking and bicycling to school aids in children obtaining their needed daily physical exercise. It should include elements of the SRTS program such as educational and encouragement programs and events to increase the

amount of children walking and bicycling as well as improving route safety and accessibility.

School Siting Policy

The overall school siting policy (Policy Code 9010) does address the need to consider accessibility for students and the community. However, this is not specific enough and should include language that refers to “pedestrian and bicycle accessibility.” The policy should be revised to provide more opportunity for schools to be located within the core of towns, near residential areas that are free of barriers for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The high-performance building design criteria (Policy Code 9040) is a great addition to this policy that does specifically address the need to address alternative transportation. This language should be maintained as-is.