

Chapter 1: BACKGROUND

In recent years, there has been a growing call to link active transportation with land use and transportation decisions and an increasing understanding of the benefits of active transportation. Through VISION 2040 and the Regional Transportation Plan, the region has committed to provide a more efficient and accessible public transportation system serving compact, walkable, and livable communities. Reaching this goal requires an increase active transportation investments and is supported by regional, state and federal policy.

FEDERAL POLICY GUIDANCE

Federal policy only relatively recently started to recognize needs to plan for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Some watershed legislation in this arena occurred with passage of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) in 1990 and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998, both of which recognized the need to plan for bicycle and pedestrian modes of transportation as part of the transportation system.

The passage of TEA-21 provided the funding opportunities, planning processes, and policy language to help transportation agencies achieve national goals of increasing non-motorized transportation to at least 15 percent of all trips and reducing the number of non-motorized users killed or injured in traffic crashes by at least 10 percent⁴. TEA-21 called for bicycle and pedestrian facilities to be considered in conjunction with all new federally funded construction and reconstruction transportation projects, where appropriate and permitted.

In response to TEA-21, in 1999 the USDOT's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) worked with its partners to develop the *Policy Statement on Accommodating Bicyclists and Pedestrians in Transportation Projects*.² The purpose of the Policy Statement is to recommend an approach that can be used by transportation agencies to develop transportation infrastructure that is "safe, convenient, accessible, and attractive to motorized AND non-motorized users alike."

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990³ require public rights-of-way and facilities to be accessible to persons with disabilities. Under Section 504, FHWA monitors the compliance of federal aid recipients with these statutory requirements. As part of its oversight role, FHWA works to ensure that accessibility is accommodated in all state and local transportation policy, planning, and projects.

In 2010, the USDOT provided the *USDOT Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations*⁴ to reflect the department's support for the development of walking

² U.S. Department of Transportation. Federal Highway Administration (2013, March 8). *Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach*. Retrieved from: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/design.cfm

³ U.S. Department of Transportation. Federal Highway Administration. *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)/Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/ada.cfm>

⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation. Federal Highway Administration (2013, March 8). *United States Department of Transportation Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations*. Retrieved from: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/policy_accom.cfm

and bicycling networks as part of federally funded projects. With this statement, the USDOT encouraged transportation agencies to “**go beyond the minimum requirements, and proactively provide convenient, safe, and context-sensitive facilities** that foster increased use by people who walk and bike of all ages and abilities, and utilize universal design characteristics when appropriate.”

Title 23 contains planning regulations for how states and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are to accommodate walking and bicycling throughout the planning process.⁵ State transportation agencies and MPOs are required to integrate walking and bicycling facilities and programs into their long-range transportation plans and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs). MPOs are also required to develop a documented participation plan which demonstrates that representatives of non-motorized users and representatives of the disabled are provided with opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan planning process.

STATE POLICY GUIDANCE

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), adopted in 1990, requires communities in the state to develop comprehensive plans to manage their population growth. In 2005, the legislature amended the transportation planning requirements under the GMA (RCW 36.70a.070)⁶ to require a pedestrian and bicycle component that includes “**collaborative efforts to identify and designate planned improvements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and corridors that address and encourage enhanced community access and promote healthy lifestyles**” as one of the mandatory elements for community comprehensive plans.

The Washington Administrative Code (WAC 365-196-430)⁷ provides more specific requirements for the pedestrian and bicycle transportation elements of comprehensive plans including:

- References to local, regional, and state pedestrian and bicycle planning documents;
- Planned improvements for bicycle facilities and corridors, including a map of bicycle facilities;
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- Plan for a network that connects residential and employment areas with community and regional destinations, schools, and public transportation services;
- Review of existing pedestrian and bicycle collision data; and a
- Multiyear financing plan.

State law (RCW 47.06.100) requires a bicycle transportation and pedestrian walkways plan as part of the statewide multimodal transportation plan. The statewide goal of the *Washington State Bicycle Facilities*

⁵ U.S. Department of Transportation. Federal Highway Administration. *FHWA Guidance: Bicycle and Pedestrian Provisions of Federal Transportation Legislation*. Retrieved from: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/guidance_2015.cfm

⁶ Washington State Legislature (n.d.). *RCW 36.70a.070: Comprehensive plans - Mandatory elements*. Retrieved from: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=36.70a.070>

⁷ Washington State Legislature (2010). *WAC 365-196-430: Transportation element*. Retrieved from: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=365-196-430>

*and Pedestrian Walkways Plan*⁸ is to “increase bicycling and walking five percent per year for the next 20 years while reducing injuries and deaths.” This plan establishes objectives and performance measures in each of the state’s five transportation policy areas⁹: Preservation, Safety, Mobility, Environment, and Stewardship.

In 2011, the Washington State Legislature passed the Complete Streets Act¹⁰ encouraging local governments to adopt their own complete streets ordinances. This resulted in the Complete Streets Grant Program to encourage local governments within the state to retrofit streets to “provide safe access to all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, motorists, and public transportation users.”

THE TEN ELEMENTS OF A COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

Regardless of a policy’s form, the National Complete Streets Coalition has identified ten elements of a comprehensive Complete Streets policy, as discussed below.

An ideal Complete Streets policy:

- Includes a vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets
- Specifies that ‘all users’ includes pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses and automobiles
- Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right of way
- Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions
- Encourages street connectivity and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes
- Is adoptable by all agencies to cover all roads
- Directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs
- Directs that Complete Streets solutions will complement the context of the community
- Establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes
- Includes specific next steps for implementation of the policy

⁸ Washington State Department of Transportation (n.d.). *State Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan*. Retrieved from: http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/bike_plan.htm

⁹ Washington State Legislature (2002). *RCW 47.04.28001.012: Transportation system policy goals*. Retrieved from: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=47.04.280>

¹⁰ Washington State Legislature (2011). *RCW 47.04.257: Complete streets grant program*. Retrieved from: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=47.04.320>

REGIONAL POLICY GUIDANCE



A core concept of VISION 2040 is improving the safety of the transportation system for drivers, freight, transit riders, pedestrians, bicyclists and others. Multicounty planning policies¹¹ adopted in VISION 2040 call for designing transportation facilities to serve all users safely and efficiently. The plan focuses on integrating land use and transportation strategies, and on building and improving the region's pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. These strategies reduce the need for driving alone and create a better environment for walking and bicycling.

Active Transportation supports many of the VISION 2040 MPPs, with particular relevance to the following transportation policies:

- MPP-T-5: Foster a less polluting system that reduces the negative effects of transportation infrastructure and operation on the climate and natural environment.
- MPP-T-7: Develop a transportation system that minimizes negative impacts to human health.
- MPP-T-11: Prioritize investments in transportation facilities and services in the urban growth area that support compact, pedestrian- and transit-oriented densities and development.
- MPP-T-25: Ensure mobility choices for people with special transportation needs, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, young, and low-income populations.

PSRC works with countywide planning groups, local jurisdictions, transit agencies and others, to ensure that regional and local planning efforts are coordinated, and that regional policies and provisions are addressed in local plans. The PSRC Policy and Plan Review Process¹² is designed to further this coordination and to satisfy federal and state requirements. Certification of local plans by PSRC is a requirement for jurisdictions and agencies that intend to apply for PSRC funding.

¹¹ Puget Sound Regional Council (n.d.). Part III: Multicounty Planning Policies. In *VISION 2040*. Retrieved from https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/part_iii_multicounty_planning_policies.pdf

¹² Puget Sound Regional Council (2003, September). *Puget Sound Regional Council Adopted Policy and Plan Review Process*. Retrieved from: <https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/process.pdf>