

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM #4
Vermont Agency of Transportation
***Pedestrian and Bicycle Vision, Goals,
Objectives, and Policies***

**Vermont Bicycle and
Pedestrian Policy Plan**

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Technical Memo #4

4.0 Vermont Pedestrian and Bicycle Vision, Goals, Objectives and Policy

Disclaimer: The information in this memorandum is presented as a draft document to facilitate the discussion of policy issues as they relate to the revision of the VT Bicycle and Pedestrian Policy Plan. Inclusion here does not constitute an endorsement by VTTrans of the policies stated unless otherwise noted.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This memorandum presents the draft vision, goals, and objectives and policy statement for the updated Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian Policy Plan. These statements are based on a review of existing State pedestrian and bicycle programs, policy guidance from FHWA and other States and input that has been provided by municipalities, regional planning entities, the general public and the Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian Policy Plan Advisory Committee.

The following issues are discussed:

- Previous vision and goals from the *State of Vermont Agency of Transportation Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (1998) (The 1998 Plan)*
- Updated pedestrian and bicycle vision and goals
- Updated pedestrian and bicycle objectives
- Updated policy statement

4.2 FRAMEWORK FOR REVISING THE VISION, GOALS AND POLICIES

VTTrans established a vision statement and a set of goals for pedestrian and bicycle transportation in the 1998 *Plan* which was meant to serve as a general vision for all of Vermont, not just for VTTrans. In 2002, VTTrans developed a newer policy statement in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Planning and Design Manual. The 2002 policy had a mix of vision statements, action recommendations and policy within the same text. The current (2006) VT Bicycle and Pedestrian Policy Plan proposes to consolidate and clarify these previous efforts into a more succinct and organized framework. Much of the work done before is carried forward in this newly reorganized text; however it also attempts to address several deficiencies in the previous policy. The new framework is therefore as follows:

Vision Statement – the vision statement defines what Vermont will become after the goals, objectives, policies and actions have been accomplished. Accomplishing the vision will require the efforts of many different agencies, organizations and individuals throughout Vermont, and thus, this vision is meant to represent the vision of the many various agencies, entities, municipalities, individuals and others that are interested in the future of bicycling and walking in Vermont.

Goals – the goals are broad statements that refine the vision into specific goals such as safety, environmental stewardship, health, and transportation choices. These are also meant to represent the broad goals of the larger Vermont population beyond VTTrans.

Objectives – the objectives are broad, but begin to identify specific strategies for accomplishing the vision and goals. The responsibility for carrying out the goals and objectives falls upon many different agencies and organizations beyond VTTrans.

Policies – for the purposes of this Plan, the policies are specific ways that VTTrans will incorporate pedestrian and bicycle transportation needs into projects and programs undertaken by the Agency. Unlike the vision, goals and objectives, the policies are specific to VTTrans.

Actions – the actions (to be provided in Technical Memorandum #5) are specific activities that will be undertaken not only VTTrans but also by a variety of project partners in order to achieve the objectives. Actions typically have a specific timeframe and are usually assigned to a specific agency, organization, municipality, division, section or unit.

4.3 VISION AND GOALS OF THE 1998 PLAN

The vision from the 1998 Plan was a broad statement that described the role of VTTrans in providing an environment that is supportive of pedestrian and bicycle transportation and noted the many benefits of non-motorized transportation in general:

Vermont will provide a safe, convenient and accessible environment for bicyclists and pedestrians for both transportation and recreation. All transportation projects will recognize and consider bicyclist and pedestrian needs. Local government and citizen involvement will be integral to the planning process. Bicycle and pedestrian systems will provide mobility and links with other transportation modes, while enhancing our appreciation of Vermont's natural environment, the community character of its town centers, and the overall quality of life in the State.

The four goals of the plan described how pedestrian and bicycle projects benefit Vermont:

- To provide all residents and visitors to Vermont with a safe, efficient and accessible transportation system that allows them to walk and bicycle with independence and comfort.
- To support and enhance a healthy environment and ecosystem by providing safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian facilities, which will help to accomplish this.
- To support and encourage bicycling and walking by integrating transportation and land use decisions to protect and enhance a development pattern of human scale villages/cities/settlements, surrounded by nature and agriculture.
- To allow all residents and visitors to Vermont to safely use public transportation corridors for bicycling and walking (except where prohibited by law).

4.4 PROPOSED VISION AND GOALS

The vision statement of the plan defines what Vermont will become after the goals, objectives, policies and actions of this plan have been accomplished. It is meant to be a broad statement that applies to the larger Vermont community rather than just a pedestrian and bicycle vision for VTTrans. The proposed vision statement has been simplified from the 1998 *Plan* to create a clearer, more concise message about the desired non-motorized transportation environment in Vermont. It consists of modified versions of the first and last sentences of the previous vision:

Vermont provides safe, convenient and accessible conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. Bicycle, pedestrian and roadway networks provide mobility and links with other transportation modes, while complementing Vermont's natural environment, community character, and overall quality of life.

The goals of the plan are broad statements that further refine the vision into specific goals. The goals are meant to provide guidance on pedestrian and bicycle issues beyond VTTrans. The proposed goals have also been revised from the 1998 *Plan* to clarify and simplify the message about the benefits of non-motorized transportation in Vermont. There are six basic reasons for enhancing the pedestrian and bicycle system (order does not indicate importance or priority): safety, economic vitality, natural environment, transportation choice, and health. These goals are presented below in alphabetical order:

- **Cultural Environment.** Enhance the human scale and livability of Vermont's communities by improving opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle activity in towns, downtowns, villages and rural landscapes.
- **Economic Vitality.** Enhance the economic vitality of Vermont by increasing economic development opportunities (e.g., create small businesses catering to pedestrian and bicycle needs, make commercial districts more attractive and accessible), providing greater transportation efficiency and choice, and improving tourism activities that are created by better pedestrian and bicycle transportation options.
- **Health.** Improve the health of Vermonters and reduce health care costs by making it easy and convenient for citizens to be more physically active by walking and bicycling on a regular basis.
- **Natural Environment.** Improve the environmental quality of Vermont by increasing the number of trips made by pedestrians and bicyclists and reducing pollutants emitted by motor vehicles.
- **Safety.** Improve and promote the safety of pedestrian and bicycle travel throughout the entire roadway, sidewalk, shared use path, and rail-trail system in Vermont.
- **Transportation Choice.** Enhance pedestrian and bicycle transportation options in Vermont so that citizens, regardless of location or socioeconomic status, can choose a

convenient and comfortable mode that meets their needs. Ensure that the transportation system facilitates the ability for pedestrians and bicyclists to connect to other modes.

The proposed pedestrian and bicycle vision and goals will give VTTrans staff, municipalities, regional planning organizations, businesses, advocacy groups, and other citizens a clear message about the responsibility to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists and the benefits of having a non-motorized transportation system in Vermont.

4.5 PROPOSED OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the plan are broad statements that identify specific strategies for accomplishing the vision and goals that would apply beyond VTTrans. These objectives provide a framework for the specific actions by a wide range of agencies, entities, or organizations that will be necessary to achieve each of the five goals. The proposed Vermont pedestrian and bicycle objectives are listed below in no particular order of importance. Nor are they listed according to each of the six specific goals because each of them will contribute to all six goals. Note that the specific actions for each objective will be provided in Technical Memorandum #5.

Objective 1. Accommodate pedestrian and bicycle transportation in VTTrans-funded projects and programs.

Objective 2. Build and maintain the ability and expertise within all VTTrans Divisions to address relevant pedestrian and bicycle needs and issues.

Objective 3. Provide pedestrian and bicycle planning, technical, and financial assistance to local governments and regional planning organizations.

Objective 4. Fund planning, design, construction and maintenance of pedestrian and bicycle projects and programs at an adequate level.

Objective 5. Maintain pedestrian and bicycle facilities in good operating condition for their expected use.

Objective 6. Educate pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists about safe operating behavior.

Objective 7. Encourage more Vermonters to walk and bicycle through programs and promotions.

Objective 8. Work with citizens, municipalities, and regional planning organizations to develop, plan, and implement pedestrian and bicycle plans, projects, and programs.

Objective 9. Develop measures to track progress on improving pedestrian and bicycle programs, participation, safety, and accommodation.

Objective 10. Assess the economic benefits (e.g., small business and community development, transportation efficiency and choice, and tourism) and the natural and

cultural benefits (e.g., cleaner air, cleaner water, and enhanced community character) of pedestrian and bicycle activity in Vermont.

Objective 11. Promote smart growth principles throughout Vermont to make pedestrian and bicycle travel more convenient.

Objective 12. Promote seamless linkages between walking, bicycling and other modes of personal transportation.

4.6 VTRANS PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE POLICY

4.6.1. Background

The current VTrans Pedestrian and Bicycle Policy is stated in the *VTrans Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Planning and Design Manual* (2002). In part, the current policy reads:

VTrans is committed to assuming a leadership role in promoting pedestrian and bicycle improvements; VTrans will address bicycling and pedestrian issues in all long range transportation plans developed with State or federal funds; incorporate bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the implementation of all transportation projects and programs, where applicable; ensure safe routes of travel for all pedestrians; and design, construct and maintain all streets and highways where bicyclists are permitted under the assumption that they will be used by bicyclists.

The full VTrans policy is described in more detail in Technical Memo 2. This current policy addresses many topics, such as the need for a network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, land use issues, access for individuals with disabilities, data collection and evaluation, promotion of walking and bicycling, and a sense of neighborhood and community. While these broad statements are helpful in establishing a vision, they are not specific enough for use on a project level. For example, it may be difficult for the various sections within VTrans to understand their role in “promoting a connected network” of pedestrian/bicycle facilities in compact villages and urban centers.

Therefore, this plan proposes a new Pedestrian and Bicycle Policy that is specific to VTrans. The main focus of the new policy will be to provide direction within VTrans. While coordination with other State agencies, organizations, citizens, businesses, etc. is critical for improving pedestrian and bicycle transportation in Vermont, the responsibilities of these supporting agencies will be articulated in the vision, goals, objectives, and recommended actions in this Policy Plan.

The section below presents a new VTrans Pedestrian and Bicycle policy that describes more clearly what is meant by accommodating pedestrian and bicycle issues in the everyday operations of VTrans.

4.6.2. VTrans Pedestrian and Bicycle Policy Statement

At each stage of planning, design, construction, implementation, operations and maintenance activities, VTrans-funded projects and programs, wherever reasonably

feasible, should accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. New projects, road reconstruction projects and capacity improvements will maintain or improve existing access and conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. Education and encouragement programs will incorporate pedestrian and bicycle issues, as appropriate.

4.6.3 Applicability to VTrans Activities and Programs

The following clarifies the methods by which VTrans will accomplish the policy stated above.

Project Development Process

The new VTrans Pedestrian and Bicycle Policy applies to the entire project development process. Projects should address the need to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian transportation during all phases of project selection, project definition, project design, construction, and maintenance.

VTrans will work with local and regional planning organizations to identify the appropriate type of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations that will be provided for each project, taking into consideration community needs, safety, and unique environmental and aesthetic considerations as they relate to specific projects. Projects will be designed and constructed in accordance with Vermont's *State Standards for the Design of Transportation, Construction, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation of Freeways, Roads, and Streets (1997)*, *Vermont Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Planning and Design Manual* (most recent addition), as well as the *Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)* and the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*.

There is no one size fits all solution to accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians in projects. There are a wide variety of facility types and levels of safety accommodation, and tradeoffs that are necessary in constrained rights-of-way. Exploring the issues covered in the lists provided below will help to further refine the level of accommodation to be provided for pedestrians and bicyclists during the project development process:

- Is the project identified in an adopted transportation or related plan as a means of increasing pedestrian and/or bicycling activity?
- Does the project accommodate existing and/or future bicycle and pedestrian use?
- Does the project improve or maintain safety for all users?
- Does the project provide connections to public transportation services and facilities?
- Does the project serve areas or population groups with limited transportation options?
- Does the project provide a connection to bicycling and walking trip generators such as employment, education, retail, recreation, and residential centers and public facilities?
- Is the project identified in a Safe Routes to School program or provides a connection to a school?
- Does the project provide a regional connection or is of regional or State significance?
- Does the project provide a link to other bicycle and pedestrian accommodations?
- Does the project provide a connection to traverse natural or man-made barriers?
- Does the project provide a tourism or economic development benefit?

Exceptions to the new policy statement above will only be granted if one or more of the following factors are present:

- Scarcity of existing or projected population, travel, and activity centers indicate an absence of need for such accommodations, although planning for future accommodations may still be appropriate;
- Adverse natural and cultural resource impacts of providing additional space for bicycling and/or walking facilities far outweigh the need for these accommodations;
- Total cost of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations would be excessively disproportionate to the need for the facility;
- The type of specific project does not facilitate the provision of such accommodations (e.g., riprap placement; bridge bolt replacement; etc.);
- Bicycle and pedestrian travel is prohibited by State or Federal laws.

Statewide and Regional Planning

Pedestrians and bicyclists will be included as a component in statewide and regional planning activities to an extent that is commensurate with the level of consideration given to other modes. Pedestrians and bicyclists will be considered on an equal basis with projects of other modes in state, MPO, and RPC lists of future projects.

Corridor Level Planning

Pedestrian and bicycle circulation will be a component of corridor level plans, as specified in the VTrans *Vermont Corridor Management Handbook*. Corridor plans will establish a balance between meeting the needs of motorized users with the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, particularly with respect to providing space for bicyclists for on-road travel, buffers from traffic for pedestrians, and providing safer and efficient crossings where pedestrian exposure and crossing distances are minimized.

Access-controlled corridors can create barriers to bicycle and pedestrian travel. Bicycling and walking may be accommodated within or adjacent to access-controlled corridors through the provision of facilities on physically separated parallel facilities within the right-of-way or parallel roadways, railroad corridors, or greenways. Ensuring the ability to cross such corridors should be provided to establish or maintain connectivity of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Planning, Permitting, and Project Definition

Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations will be included in the preparation and selection of project alternatives. VTrans will consider the current and anticipated future use of the affected facilities by bicyclists and pedestrians, the potential impacts of the alternatives on bicycle and pedestrian travel, and the proposed measures to preserve or enhance accommodation of pedestrian and bicycle travel during all phases of project development, including:

- Local Concerns meetings;
- Field visits, counts, and other primary data collection activities;
- Reviewing existing plans, gathering GIS and CAD data, and other secondary data collection activities; and

- Preparation of Scoping Reports, traffic impact studies, project plans, environmental documents, and permit requests (CE, EIS, Act 250 permit, VTrans access permit); and
- 502 Hearings.

Design and Construction

The bicycle and pedestrian modes will be considered throughout the project design phase including development and review of preliminary through final plan drawings. In order to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian transportation in an effective and safe manner in a project, it is necessary for the designer to be familiar with current pedestrian and bicycle facilities as well as future pedestrian and bicycle attractors or generators that may lie outside the project limits. Maintenance of traffic flow in work zones must also address the continuance of bicycle and pedestrian traffic, per the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG).

Strategic Improvements

VTrans will establish methods and procedures to facilitate bicycle and pedestrian access through strategic improvements, such as:

- Enhancing pedestrian crossings;
- Encouraging traffic calming in appropriate locations;
- Re-striping and/or removing travel lanes on existing roadways that have excess width or capacity to accommodate bike lanes or wider paved shoulders; or
- Improving traffic signals and signage to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists.

Maintenance

Prior to or during the project development process of any sidewalk or shared use path construction on or adjacent to a State highway right-of-way (including construction initiated either by VTrans or another entity), VTrans and the other entity will finalize an agreement that identifies the party (local municipality, other State agency besides VTrans, or private entity) that will be responsible for maintenance of the facility including (but not limited to) winter snow and ice removal when deemed appropriate by VTrans or the municipality..

Programs

VTrans education and outreach programs will incorporate pedestrian and bicycle issues, as appropriate. Programs will educate pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists about the rights and responsibilities of each group and how to travel safely in a multimodal environment. These programs will also encourage pedestrian and bicycle activity for people of all ages and abilities throughout Vermont. While most programs may be initiated in the Local Transportation Facilities section, programs from other divisions and departments, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Governor's Highway Safety Program, should also offer education and encouragement related to pedestrian and bicycle transportation.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The vision, goals, objectives, and policy statement in this memorandum provide the framework for specific actions to improve bicycle and pedestrian transportation in Vermont. These recommended actions will be discussed in Technical Memorandum #5.

Credits: Portions of this policy were derived from Virginia Department of Transportation's *Policy for Integrating Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations* – 2004.