

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The City of College Station recognizes the need to plan for an effective and safe bicycle, pedestrian, and greenways system as the City continues to experience change and growth over time. A community that provides opportunities to walk to a neighborhood park, jog down a meandering trail, or bicycle to work fosters and promotes a livable city. Planning for a more bikeable and walkable city while protecting open space and unique characteristics of an area strengthens a community and enriches its quality of life.

An interwoven network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and greenways offers the benefits of providing alternate modes of transportation that can alleviate traffic congestion and maximize street volume capacity, encourage healthy living, and spur economic development. Other benefits of the system include creating opportunities for outdoor recreation activities and protecting the natural environment.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This Plan is designed to provide guidance and a framework to implement the community's desire to create a bikeable, walkable, and environmentally aware and active City. This Plan is an element of the City's Comprehensive Plan adopted in May of 2009. The goals and strategies recommended in that planning process relative to the bicycle, pedestrian, and greenways system are echoed in this Plan. They reflect the desires of College Station residents and community leaders to "improve mobility through a safe, efficient, and well-connected multi-modal transportation system designed to be sensitive to the surrounding land uses" as well as to "protect environmental assets, both for their ecological functions and as key elements of community character and livability."¹



This Plan updates and combines the following three previous Plans: the Sidewalk Master Plan adopted in 1994, the Greenways Master Plan adopted in 1999, and the Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan adopted in 2002. The update builds upon previous recommendations and implementation strategies but also improves the plans by refining recommended strategies and

¹ Places, City of College Station Comprehensive Plan 2009 – 2030 (College Station, TX, 2009).

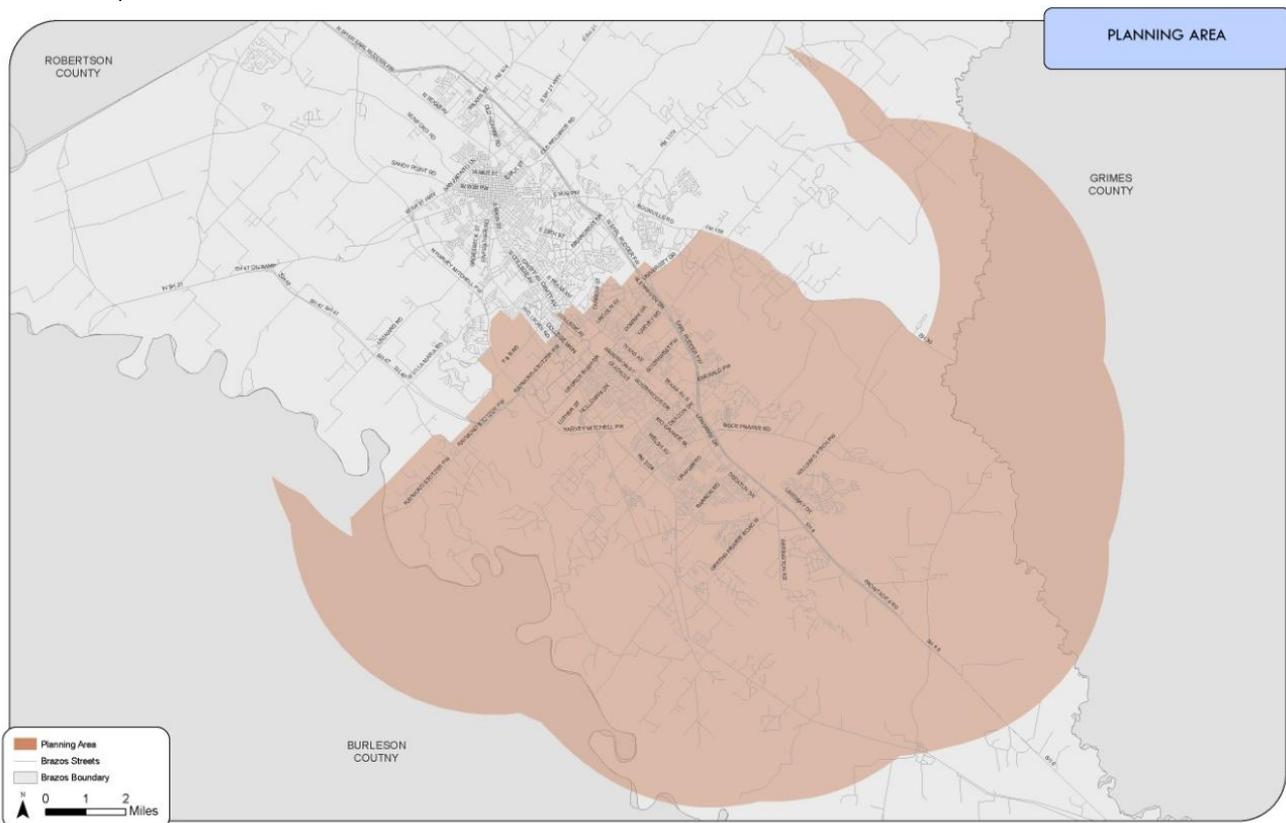
utilizing current best practices as well as the most recent design guidelines to more effectively implement the system.

This Plan also recognizes that each facility and types of users are different. Various planning approaches and strategies will be required to address these differences and needs. The City, however, also sees the value in planning for an interconnected system. An all-inclusive plan can help identify gaps in service that hinder connectivity and help present a complete vision and action plan for improving bicycling, walking, and the natural environment in which they interweave.

PLANNING AREA

The area evaluated as a part of this Plan includes the City limits of College Station and a five mile radius around the City, the future Extraterritorial Jurisdiction. The current (2010) Extraterritorial Jurisdiction is three and one-half miles beyond the current City limits but will extend out to five miles once College Station's population reaches 100,000, which is projected in the next five to ten years.

A portion of the City's northern City limit line is shared with the City of Bryan. Opportunities to connect key access points between College Station and Bryan were explored and considered as part of this Plan. They are included as a part of the proposed facilities in Chapter 5: System Development.



PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The City of College Station initiated this planning effort as a part of the City's Comprehensive Plan (2009-2030). A variety of methods were used for involving the public, City staff, local agencies, and elected officials/appointed boards in the development of this Plan. Below is a brief summary of the roles of various groups.

Staff Resource Team

A Staff Resource Team consisted of representatives from various City departments that were instrumental in implementing the Plan. The Staff Resource Team's responsibilities included:

- Identifying issues and concerns during the development of the Plan;
- Identifying and solving potential problems during future implementation of the Plan;
- Reviewing and proposing any needed modifications as necessary to recommendations presented in the Plan;
- Gathering and disseminating information to and from various City departments; and
- Serving as advocates and consensus builders during the planning process.

Technical Task Force

A Technical Task Force was comprised of citizens who could provide technical expertise, guidance, and critical feedback in the development of the Plan. Areas of expertise included transportation planning/engineering, recreation, environmental/ecological science, storm water/floodplain management, landscape architecture, and real estate. The Technical Task Force also included those with a special interest in bicycling both to commute and for recreation as well as a walker/runner. The Technical Task Force's responsibilities included:

- Advising staff on opportunities, policy matters, and community issues relative to the creation of the Plan;
- Providing best management practices related to the members' areas of expertise;
- Reviewing and providing comments on draft chapters and reports of the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenways Master Plan prepared by staff; and
- Interacting with citizens and citizen groups to develop and promote interest and involvement in the planning process.

Citizen Engagement

Public participation is vital to creating a plan that meets the needs of a community. A variety of techniques were used to gain input from citizens including an on-line survey, community meetings, and focus group meetings. The City's Comprehensive Plan update also relied heavily on citizen involvement. Information gathered during that effort was utilized in the development of this Plan. A more detailed explanation of the citizen engagement process and a summary of findings are available in Chapter 3: Needs Assessment.



Elected Officials/Appointed Boards

Updates were provided during the planning process to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the City Council. Input was received to steer the planning process.

Adoption of Plan

Two public hearings were held in January 2010 for adoption of the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenways Master Plan.

SCOPE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

This Plan provides goals, strategies, and action items for system development, management, and implementation over the next 10 years. These recommendations, however, also provide a long term vision that should be referenced to build and improve the system over the next few decades.

This Plan includes the following major sections:

- **Introduction** – Presents an explanation of the planning purpose, development, history, and progress made since the adoption of previous plans.
- **Existing Conditions** – Provides an overview of the City of College Station, describes natural and manmade features, and describes the existing bicycle, pedestrian, and greenways system.
- **Needs Assessment** – Provides an overview of the benefits of the system, identifies types of users and their preferences, evaluates existing data on use and safety, and summarizes needs and preferences expressed through the citizen engagement process and other planning efforts.
- **Goals and Strategies** – Presents the goals and strategies of the Plan.
- **System Development** – Proposes the addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and greenways needed for the future. This section also includes policy statements.
- **System Management** – Provides recommendations on how to manage the system including operations, land stewardship, programs, maintenance, and safety. This section also includes policy statements.
- **Implementation** – Outlines implementation methods; identifies funding sources and planning level costs; and prioritizes projects.
- **Appendices** – Provides additional information related to the planning process and information that supports the bicycle, pedestrian, and greenways system. It also includes Design Considerations that will help update referenced standards for designing and constructing facilities.

PLANNING HISTORY

Bicycling in College Station

In 1975, the Brazos Valley League of Women Voters, the Environmental Action Council, and the A&M Wheelman Club collected data that concluded that more than 10,000 bicycle trips were occurring on a daily basis to and from Texas A&M University campus.² As a result of this study, the City began planning to develop bicycle routes in the Southside and Eastgate areas. By August of 1976, the proposed routes had been signed and the City applied for Federal funds to develop an improved system. Unfortunately, the funds never materialized.



In 1980, City staff, along with members of the community, revised policies and developed the first City Bike Plan (refer to Appendix A). Many residents objected to the 24 hour parking restriction along the signed routes, so City officials only installed bike lanes on two streets - Jersey Street (now George Bush Drive [FM 2347]) and Southwest Parkway.³ It included bike lanes, signed bike routes, and some paths on Texas Avenue [BUS 6]. The City also prohibited bicycle travel on a designated portion of Texas Avenue [BUS 6] (from Lincoln Avenue to Holleman Drive) and along Harvey Road [SH 30]. The Bike Plan created the foundation for subsequent plans that served to address the high volume of students commuting to and from Texas A&M University campus.

The Greenway Concept

In 1988, the Wolf Pen Creek Master Plan was adopted to promote urban development, with Wolf Pen Creek as an amenity, by preserving as much of the creek's plants and wildlife as possible and by introducing multi-use paths for bicycling and walking. The Plan also sought to manage drainage in relation to storm water management and tried to prevent soil erosion along creek banks. The Wolf Pen Creek Zoning District followed with standards for treatment of the creek and adjacent areas as development occurred, including regulations that encouraged private development oriented towards the creek.

In the spring of 1997, the Brazos Greenways Council formed as a non-profit organization and was instrumental in developing partnerships and creating a vision for the community's greenway system. They asked the City to appoint a group of citizens to develop a master plan to address statements made in the City's 1997 Comprehensive Plan that referenced greenways and open

² "Survey Provides Check of Traffic to Aid Bicyclists," *The Eagle* (Bryan-College Station, TX), 20 October 1975.

³ Ballew, Deborah L., *College Station 1938/1988*.



Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenways Master Plan

space. The Greenways Implementation Task Force was appointed in 1998 and that same year citizens approved \$3.64 million in bond funds to acquire greenway property along floodplains. The Greenways Master Plan – “A Network of Greenways for College Station” was adopted in 1999.

The Greenways Master Plan defined greenways for College Station and the surrounding areas; classified and prioritized greenway corridors; provided guidance on the development of greenway trails; and provided an implementation plan.

Bicycling, Walking, and Greenways

In 1992, the City of College Station updated the Bikeway Master Plan. This update identified not only bicycle facilities but incorporated pedestrian facilities and multi-use paths in the form of sidewalks, side paths, and greenway trails. It called for approximately 40 miles of bike lanes, 50 miles of bike routes, and 30 miles of multi-use paths. That same year, the City’s Subdivision Regulations were modified to include the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, specifically sidewalks and bikeways on collector and arterial streets. In 1994, the Sidewalk Master Plan (refer to Appendix B for map) was created with the help of a Sidewalk Committee.

In 2002, the Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan Update was completed. It called for 20 miles in addition to 25 miles of existing bicycle lanes, 50 miles in addition to 59 miles of existing bicycle routes, and 40 miles in addition to 3 miles of existing multi-use paths. In 2003, the City of College Station was designated as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. In 2005, the Hike and Bike Task Force was formulated to prioritize the multi-use paths defined in the 2002 Plan.

PROGRESS ON PLANS

The Greenways Master Plan and the Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan each identified implementation recommendations that pertained to acquisition; regulation; construction, maintenance, and operations; and education and encouragement. Appendix C provides a complete list of these recommendations with a status on progress or planning considerations for the system. Below are highlights on progress and planning considerations that are further pursued in the creation and implementation of this Plan. Due to the relationship between these two plans, there is some overlap in planning considerations.

Greenways Master Plan

Acquisition

The City of College Station currently has over 500 acres of publically owned greenway property which follow stream corridors and their floodplain. The City has acquired 376 acres through fee simple acquisition and 125 acres through voluntary dedications. As acquisition funds become limited, new sources of funding will need to be identified, as well as methods to maximize available funds through other means such as matching grants. Greenway easements that may be

less costly should be considered, as well as allocating land acquisition funds in the scope of capital improvement projects for greenway trail development. In order to encourage voluntary protection and dedication of greenways by landowners, the creation of an advocacy group may be necessary to collaborate with the City on education, encouragement, and effective initiatives.

Regulation

Greenway property dedication is currently voluntary. The Parkland Dedication Ordinance does allow land in floodplains or designated greenways to be considered on a three for one basis where three acres of floodplain or greenway are equal to one acre of park. Regulations to protect greenways and provide right-of-way for trails may be necessary to implement the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenways Master Plan especially with limited funding sources and continued growth. Street layouts that maximize access, visibility, and connections to and within the greenway system should also be encouraged.



Construction, Maintenance, and Operations

Five miles of trails were constructed in the last ten years. This includes trails along Wolf Pen Creek, within Stephen C. Beachy Central Park, and along the perimeter of Texas A&M University's main campus. Maintenance costs for existing trails continue to be incorporated into various department budgets. The maintenance of greenway property, however, has not been the purview of a specific department.

A Greenways Program Manager position was funded in 1999 to implement the Greenways Master Plan and develop a program to coordinate acquisition, development, and management of the system.

Protecting and restoring greenway corridors will need to be further explored. Urbanization, which can lead to loss of open space along stream corridors (riparian areas),

and storm water runoff create adverse impacts on greenways. These impacts include the removal of canopy cover, a decrease in surface water quality, an increase in soil erosion and an increase in flooding. The design of greenway trails within these corridors will require cognizance of the need for the greenway to handle flood water while preserving and restoring greenways as natural resources.



Education and Encouragement

The greenways system currently does not have resources in place for education and encouragement beyond the Greenways Program Manager staff position. Additional resources will need to be allocated, as well as a means of advocacy established. Education about greenways and their benefits, as well as encouragement to help protect and maintain the system, are needed. Steps will need to be taken to maintain an inventory of wildlife, vegetation, wetlands, and other natural features that exist along stream corridors so that management of greenway property can best enhance wildlife and plant habitats.

Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan

Acquisition and Regulation

Street projects continue to be the driving force behind the development of bike lanes, bike routes, and sidewalks. Through public and private investments, these facilities continue to expand as the City grows. The addition of right-of-way for the development of multi-use paths, however, is independent of these street projects and requires additional steps to achieve. Currently, regulations require the dedication of right-of-way for a multi-use path with the platting of any proportional development.

Additional regulations have been adopted to facilitate the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Improved bicycle and pedestrian circulation within private developments, however, is still needed through a change in size of access ways, street layouts, and block length requirements.

Construction and Maintenance

The addition of facilities and their maintenance continues to occur through public and private investments. Seven miles of bike lanes were added in the last 10 years as well as additional bike routes and sidewalks.

Education and Encouragement

Although bicycle awareness and education campaigns are occasionally conducted, additional efforts to educate and encourage citizens to bicycle and walk are needed. The bicycle and pedestrian system currently does not have resources in place for furthering education and encouragement. Resources will need to be allocated as well as a means of advocacy established.

RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS

Other planning efforts were considered and have influenced the recommendations of this Plan. They include the following:

- 2000-2020 Bryan Comprehensive Plan – A Hike and Bike Access Plan and Sidewalk Master Plan were referenced for connections between College Station and Bryan (refer to Appendix D and E).
- Texas A&M University –
 - The Campus Access and Parking Plan – Completed in 2000, this Plan provides recommendations for bicycle facilities on campus including developing a campus-wide bicycle system that connects to the community's bicycle facilities.
 - Vision 2020 – Adopted in 1999, this Plan provides goals that Texas A&M University would target over the next twenty years with the anticipated growth of the student population as well as the campus.

TERMINOLOGY

Definitions to key terms used in this Plan are provided below.

Bicycle Facilities

The City of College Station currently has a number of different facilities to accommodate the needs of bicyclists. They include bike lanes, bike routes, and multi-use paths as well as associated signage, signals, and bicycle parking.

For the purpose of this Plan, all such facilities described below are referenced as bicycle facilities. Multi-use paths (side paths and greenway trails) are also considered.



Bike Lane

A designated part of the roadway, typically 5 feet wide, that is striped, signed, and has pavement markings to be used exclusively by bicyclists.

Picture Source: www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan Burden



Bike Route

A roadway that is shared by both bicycles and motor vehicles. Wide outside lanes and shoulders can serve as bike routes with signage.

Picture Source: www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan Burden



Side Path (Multi-use Path)

A wider sidewalk (10-12 feet wide) alongside a road with minimal cross flow by motor vehicles.



Greenway Trail (Multi-use Path)

All-weather and accessible paths for pedestrians and bicyclists. These are typically 10-12 feet in width.

Pedestrian Facilities

Pedestrian facilities include sidewalks, crosswalks, ramps, and medians, as well as associated signage, shelters, and signals. Multi-use paths including side paths and greenway trails, as referenced above, are also pedestrian facilities.



Sidewalks

Walkways alongside roads, typically five to eight feet wide, for pedestrians.

Greenways

Greenways include corridors along streams (and their floodplain and/or riparian area) that are designated for the protection of open space and greenway trails.



Greenways

Linear open space corridors that follow natural features such as creeks and rivers, and their floodplains, or human-made features such as utility, road, or rail corridors.