

Planning for Bicycling and Walking: 2005 Amendments to the Growth Management Act

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Overview

This guidance is intended to help those Washington counties, cities, and towns fully planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA) to understand and comply with 2005 amendments to the GMA requiring communities to plan for bicycle and pedestrian transportation and physical activity. Many local governments have already met these requirements; however, this guidance may provide some new ideas. In addition, it is in the best interest of communities to have fully-developed and adopted plans for bicycle and pedestrian transportation networks to be ready as grant opportunities arise.

The Washington state departments of Transportation (WSDOT), Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED), and Health (DOH) used WSDOT's *2005 Bicycle Transportation and Walkways Plan*,¹ DOH's *Washington State Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan*,² and information regarding active living and active community environments as the basis for this guidance.³

Background

Obesity in the United States has become an epidemic over the past two decades.⁴ The latest data from the National Center for Health Statistics shows that 30 percent of U.S. adults 20 years of age and older – more than 60 million people – are obese. Among children and teens aged 6-19 years, 16 percent (over 9 million young people) are considered overweight. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of many diseases and health conditions. One of the contributing factors to obesity in our nation and our state is lack of physical activity. Despite all the benefits of being physically active, most Americans are sedentary. The belief that physical activity is limited to exercise or sports may keep people from being active. Another myth is that physical activity must be vigorous to achieve health benefits. Physical activity is any bodily movement that results in an expenditure of energy.

Communities, homes, and workplaces can all influence people's health decisions. Because of this influence, it is important to create environments in these locations that make it easier to engage in physical activity and to eat a healthy diet. Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5186, passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2005, made two amendments to the GMA to require Washington communities to address this problem. This bill:

1. Requires communities to consider urban planning approaches that promote physical activity, and
2. Requires a bicycle and pedestrian component be included in the Transportation Element of a comprehensive plan.

¹ Washington State Department of Transportation, *Washington State's 2005 Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan*, 2005. www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/PDF/2005_bicycle_transportation_pedestrian_walkways_plan.pdf.

² *Washington State Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan: Policy and Environmental Approaches* www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/NutritionPA/default.htm.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Active Community Environments Initiative, Atlanta, Georgia. www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/aces.htm.

⁴ Ibid.

1. Urban Planning Approaches that Promote Physical Activity

ESSB 5186 added a requirement to the Land Use Element of the comprehensive plan for jurisdictions fully planning under the GMA: “Wherever possible, the Land Use Element should consider utilizing urban planning approaches that promote physical activity” [RCW 36.70A.070(1)]. Several studies have demonstrated that a person’s immediate environment is the most important determination of physical activity.⁵ In many communities, practices such as Euclidean zoning (separated land uses), disconnected development patterns, and auto-oriented street standards have created an environment that makes walking and bicycling challenging and unappealing. With increased suburbanization, more and more Washington residents live in automobile-oriented communities rather than an environment where active modes of transport (walking, cycling, and other non-motorized methods) are encouraged.

In a movement to counter this trend, the CDC is promoting an Active Community Environments (ACEs) Initiative. ACEs are places where people of all ages and abilities can easily enjoy walking and bicycling as part of everyday life. These areas support and promote physical activity with sidewalks, safe crossings, bicycle facilities, paths and trails, parks and open spaces, and recreation facilities. They are also places where mixed-use development is promoted and people live within a connected grid of streets that allow easy walking between homes, work, schools, and stores. To fulfill the requirements of ESSB 5186, the following examples could be considered urban planning approaches that promote physical activity.⁶

Land Use-Based Approaches to Promoting Physical Activity

- Designate mixed-use community centers that locate destinations within close proximity to residences to increase opportunities for walking and bicycling.^{7,8} Neighborhood, town, and urban centers can be matched to the scale of the community.
 - Neighborhood centers are located predominantly within residential areas, and in addition to residential uses, might include pedestrian-oriented commercial uses, churches, daycares, civic buildings, schools, and small parks. Low residential densities of 4 to 8 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) provide minimum density to support transit service. Bellingham and Vancouver use neighborhood centers.⁹
 - Located as the focus of smaller communities, town centers may include a moderate intensity of employment, services, cultural and recreational facilities and moderate density residential (8-12 du/ac) and may be served by high capacity transit. An added bonus is that higher density land uses can provide options for smaller, more affordable housing. Many communities have long-established town centers, but the suburban communities of Mill Creek, Lake Forest Park, and Sammamish have recently designated town centers.
 - The Puget Sound Regional Council has set criteria for different types of urban centers specifying a range of 25-80 employees per acre, 10-20 households per acre, and the need for fast and frequent high capacity transit service. Outside the Puget Sound region, the cities of Bellingham and Spokane have designated their downtowns as urban centers.

⁵ Several of these studies are referenced in *Washington State Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan: Policy and Environmental Approaches*. See www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/NutritionPA/default.htm.

⁶ Many of these come from the *Washington State Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan: Policy and Environmental Approaches*. See www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/NutritionPA/default.htm. Other approaches can be found in documents on active community environments from the Centers for Disease Control and other sources on active living.

⁷ Holtzclaw, J., Using Residential Patterns to Decrease Auto Dependence and Cost, Natural Resources Defense Council, 1994, pp. 16-23.

⁸ Ewing, R., and Cervero, R., 2001. “Travel and the Built Environment: A Synthesis,” *Transportation Research Record*, No. 1780, pp. 87-114.

⁹ Bellingham’s land use plan including neighborhood plans can be seen at www.cob.org/pcd/planning/land_use.htm and Vancouver’s Land Use Element of the comprehensive plan can be seen at www.ci.vancouver.wa.us/upload/contents/535/CompPlan_Chapter1.pdf.

- Designate transit-oriented development (TOD) zones: Use high intensity TOD zones along a major transit route, or at nodes along a transit route. TOD zones are designed to provide for daily needs within walking distance of residences, and offer high quality transit for commuting and other transportation needs. The City of Vancouver uses a transit-overlay zone, which encourages infill and reinvestment in urban areas. Redmond, Tacoma, and Renton also use TOD zones.
- Encourage infill development: Allow infill techniques, such as subdivision of larger lots to provide new building lots, new home construction on existing smaller lots, division of existing homes into multiple dwelling units, and accessory dwellings (mother-in-law apartments). This type of development provides an alternative to development on the edge of an urban area, and provides higher population densities to support neighborhood services such as retail and transit. One way to encourage more infill development is to reduce impact fees in centers already served by water, sewer, and roads, and charge larger impact fees where these facilities need to be provided. The City of Vancouver has an infill ordinance.¹⁰
- Locate facilities within neighborhoods: Ensure destinations such as new parks, schools, and other activity centers are sited within walking distances of residences. This reduces the land needed for parking and provides opportunities for people to walk to these facilities. Older schools in neighborhoods can be renovated for continued or expanded use, and reduced parking requirements can encourage staff, families, and students to use active forms of transportation.
- Address standards and regulations: Review local regulations to ensure that bicyclists and pedestrians are adequately planned for in street and subdivision development standards, parking standards, and parking lot design. In addition:
 - Review minimum parking requirements for all types of land uses to ensure that excess parking does not detract from meeting bicycling, walking, and public transportation goals.
 - Use site plan review to provide an opportunity to ensure connectivity for bicycle and pedestrian access.
 - Comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act not only to provide access for the disabled, but also for people with strollers and walkers.
 - Require employers to provide bicycle parking, lockers, and showers at major employment sites.
 - Ensure that commercial parking requirements include bicycle parking and protected pedestrian access to storefronts.

Transportation-Based Approaches to Promoting Physical Activity

Another important component of promoting physical activity is to ensure that high quality bicycle and pedestrian facilities are available in the community, and that users feel safe using them. Studies have found that walking trips increased in areas with gridded street patterns. People who report having access to sidewalks are 28 percent more likely to be physically active. In traditional neighborhoods with sidewalks and connected streets, walking and bike trips tend to substitute for auto trips, particularly in urban neighborhoods.¹¹ The following transportation features may help improve transportation efficiency and increase physical activity.

- Increase connections: Where possible, develop a complete street network that accommodates multiple modes of transportation and simulates a grid pattern. In addition:
 - Strive for block sizes in the range of 200-800 feet and maximum distance between intersections of 1,000 feet on arterial streets and 500 feet on local streets.

¹⁰ Chapter 20.95 Vancouver Municipal Code.

¹¹ Brownson, R., *Environmental Determinants of Physical Activity in the U.S.*, American Journal of Public Health, 2001, Volume 91.

- Link dead-end streets as adjacent parcels are developed, or at a minimum, ensure bicycle- and pedestrian-only connections are developed to protect the fine-grained pedestrian and bicycle travel grid network.
 - Build connectivity between trails, pathways, neighborhoods, schools, and sidewalks to enhance the ability to be physically active.
 - Ensure trails and linear parks are planned to link activity centers, and are planned and developed as both recreation facilities and transportation routes.
- Increase transportation safety: Improve known accident locations as well as high-risk locations for pedestrians, bicycles, and motorists, paying particular attention to at risk groups including the young and the aging. Improvements may include providing connections, lighting, and signage, increasing safe crossing opportunities, reducing vehicle speeds, and installing separated paths and trails.
 - Be concerned about personal safety: Ensure that strategies such as crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) are considered as bicycle and pedestrian facilities are developed. Fear and the perception of danger is a significant deterrent to walking, bicycling, and using public transit. A clear division between public and private space, and passive surveillance of public areas can improve safety. The cities of SeaTac and Everett have adopted CPTED principles.¹²

2. Bicycle and Pedestrian Component in the Comprehensive Plan

ESSB 5186 requires the Transportation Element of a comprehensive plan to “include a pedestrian and bicycle component to include 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” [RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a)(7)]. Simply stated, a bicycle and pedestrian component is now specifically required in a community’s comprehensive plan. This supports goal 3 of the GMA, to encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems.

Background

A transportation system that supports more walking and bicycling has benefits for the state, its communities, and its people. For individuals, in addition to enjoyable recreation, immediate- and long-term health benefits of physical activity include reducing the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Fewer motor vehicles on the road will result in less pollution and a healthier environment. Walking and bicycling also have an economic impact. The value people place on bicycle and pedestrian facilities can be reflected in increased real property values and increased marketability for property located near trails and open space.¹³ Communities with pedestrian friendly downtowns may enhance economic vitality by encouraging visitors to stop and shop at businesses. In addition, bicycle and pedestrian facilities are much less expensive to build and maintain than auto-related infrastructure.

The Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) 1994 goal for WSDOT and other state departments of transportation over the next 20 years is to 1) Increase biking and walking to at least 15 percent of all trips, and 2) Reduce the number of bicyclists and pedestrians killed or injured in traffic crashes by at least 10

¹² SeaTac Ordinance 03-1033. More information on CPTED is available on the MRSC Web site www.mrsc.org/askmrsc/publicSafety.aspx - safety1 under Crime Prevention and www.mrsc.org/subjects/planning/cptedbib.aspx, and other sources on the Internet such as the National Crime Prevention Council www.ncpc.org/ncpc/ncpc/?pg=5882-2006-2486.

¹³ *Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails and Greenway Corridors*, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, 1995, www.nps.gov/pwro/rtca/propval.htm.

percent.¹⁴ Washington has adopted this goal in the 2005 bicycle and pedestrian component of Washington's Transportation Plan.¹⁵

Including a Bicycle and Pedestrian Component in the Comprehensive Plan

Many jurisdictions already address non-motorized transportation with a simple map of existing and planned bicycle routes, and require that sidewalks and other facilities for bicycles and pedestrians are constructed as part of new street development. Other communities, such as Bellevue and Redmond, have comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plans, and active bicycle and pedestrian advisory committees.

A typical process for developing a bicycle and pedestrian plan might include the following steps:

- **Inventory local conditions:** Conduct an analysis of local conditions, including existing sidewalks, crossings, paths, trails, parking, transit routes, transit stations, and other features important to people walking and bicycling. A community can then distinguish potential bicycle and pedestrian trip-making patterns by identifying corridors and routes that connect potential origins and destinations and present trail opportunities.
- **Consider citizens' travel behavior:** Identify and review travel pattern profiles for typical urban travel to identify the potential market for pedestrian and bicycle travel. This data can be obtained from regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). These organizations have access to such data from national personal travel and census statistics used in their regional planning models. Of particular relevance for cities and compact communities is understanding the proportional amount of daily travel in typical urban/metropolitan areas for short types of all personal travel trips (less than 1 mile and 2 to 5 miles) and longer trips (greater than 5 or 6 miles). The percentage of total daily trips in the shorter lengths of trips is a surprisingly high percentage that reflects the potential respective markets for community pedestrian and bicycle travel. A review of pedestrian and bicycle accident patterns should also be conducted to identify locations needing safety improvements. Bicyclists and pedestrians needing special consideration may include children, the handicapped, and the elderly.
- **Set goals and identify policies:**¹⁶ Identify how bicyclists and pedestrians are to be accommodated as new development occurs, and how improvements are to be prioritized. Develop a funding strategy or formula for facility development and consider benchmarks set to measure success.
- **Adopt facility design guidelines:** Consider adopting design standards and other technical assistance from WSDOT at www.wsdot.wa.gov/Walk and www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/.
- **Identify improvements:** Identify bicycle and pedestrian facility deficiencies or opportunities for improving safety and connections. Next, a prioritized list of recommended improvements to include in capital facility plans can be formulated.
- **Provide opportunities for public participation:** Before adopting the plan, be sure to work with and share draft plans with stakeholders including school districts; bicycle clubs; all city or county departments including public works, engineering, parks and recreation, health, police, and fire departments; adjacent jurisdictions; state agencies including CTED; and WSDOT's local programs engineers and planning managers at regional WSDOT offices.

¹⁴ This policy, which was adopted in 1994 as part of the National Bicycling and Walking Study, remains a high priority for the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/bp-guid.htm.

¹⁵ Washington State Department of Transportation, *Washington State's 2005 Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan*, 2005. www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/PDF/2005_bicycle_transportation_pedestrian_walkways_plan.pdf.

¹⁶ Example plans, goals, and objectives are available on the Internet at www.bikewalk.org/vision/vision_intro.htm and www.bicyclinginfo.org/pp/exemplary.htm.

- Develop implementation strategies: Identify funding for the plan, and consider a specific percentage of transportation funds each year. A community should also review development regulations to ensure they address bicycle and pedestrian needs. Other strategies could include integrating bicycle and pedestrian planning with other planning and development initiatives, considering education programs regarding bicycle and pedestrian safety, and conducting campaigns to encourage bicycle and pedestrian activity.
- Assess and monitor results: Conduct a periodic review of how well the plan is being implemented.

Some examples of bicycle and pedestrian planning strategies are as follows:

- Retrofit existing streets with pedestrian and bicycle facilities. For example, Olympia voters approved a 2004 ballot measure to fund parks and recreation facilities by a 3 percent increase to the private utility tax. This funding measure is anticipated to generate about \$2.5 million per year to construct 70,000 feet of sidewalk and acquire 500 acres of parkland in the next 20 years.
- Designate and improve safe routes to school. All Washington school districts are required to have suggested route plans for every elementary school (WAC 392-151-025). Information about safe routes to school is available on WSDOT's Web site at www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/Safe_Routes.htm. School districts in many Washington communities, including Anacortes, Napavine, Richland, and Taholah recently received WSDOT grant funds to improve safe routes to school.
- Improve walking and bicycling conditions by improving connections from residential areas to health care facilities, community centers, shopping, transit, and other services. This is especially important for seniors and children. Communities might also consider providing amenities for bicyclists and pedestrians such as shade trees and landscaping, restrooms, benches, and water fountains. It is also important to eliminate hazards to bicycle travel such as parallel bar drainage grates, traffic-actuated signals unresponsive to bicycles, and roadside debris along non-motorized routes of travel.
- Use traffic calming measures such as narrower road widths, traffic circles, speed humps, and other devices to slow traffic for safer pedestrian and bicycle use, and create safer, and more attractive streets.¹⁷ The City of Yakima adopted a policy in 1995 for reviewing and prioritizing neighborhood requests for traffic calming.¹⁸
- Enforce traffic laws and provide traffic safety education programs for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The Washington Traffic Safety Commission provides grant funding and education materials on their Web site at www.wtsc.wa.gov/rfp.html.
- Use innovative, low-cost transportation demand management (TDM) strategies (e.g., employer provided bus passes, facilities, and incentives) to help make bicycling, walking, transit, carpooling, and vanpooling more attractive commuting options. Washington's Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Act requires certain jurisdictions to develop, adopt by ordinance, and implement a commute trip reduction plan for all major employers.¹⁹

¹⁷ Many sources of information about traffic calming are available including the Federal Highways Administration (www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/tcalm/), the Institute of Transportation Engineers (www.ite.org/traffic/), and MRSC (www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Transpo/traffic/calming.aspx).

¹⁸ Neighborhood Traffic Management Program at www.ci.yakima.wa.us/services/streets/ntmp.asp.

¹⁹ RCW 70.94.521 through 551.

RESOURCES

State Agency Contacts

Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED)

Growth Management Services can provide technical assistance including examples of policies and bicycle and pedestrian plans from Washington communities, reviewing proposed policies and regulations, and assistance in implementing plans with development regulations. www.cted.wa.gov/growth
Contact Anne Fritzel, Senior Planner, (360) 725-3064, annef@cted.wa.gov.

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) maintains *The Bicycle and Pedestrian Walkways Plan*, part of the *Washington Transportation Plan*,²⁰ and provides bicycle and pedestrian planning information, design standards and other resources at www.wsdot.wa.gov/Walk and www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/, and sources of funding at www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/Funding.htm. WSDOT's Highways and Local Programs office also has resources that may be useful at www.wsdot.wa.gov/TA/Operations/LocalPlanning/Compplans.html.

Contact Paula Reeves, Highways and Local Programs, (360) 705-7258 tannerd@wsdot.wa.gov

Washington State Department of Health (DOH)

DOH's Nutrition and Physical Activity Program maintains the *Washington State Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan* on the Internet at www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/NutritionPA/default.htm.

Contact James Kisse, Physical Activity Specialist, (360) 236-3623, james.kissee@doh.wa.gov.

Other Washington Resources

Strategies and Tools to Implement Transportation-Efficient Development: A Reference Manual (Phase 2 of Integrating Land Use and Transportation Investment Decision-Making). WSDOT, 2003, www.wsdot.wa.gov/Mobility/TDM/TDMpubl.html

The Washington Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity, www.beactive.org/palinks.html.

National Resources on Active Living and Public Health

National Association of County and City Health Officials *Land Use and Health Tool Box* http://www.naccho.org/topics/hdp/land_use_planning/LUP_Toolbox.cfm

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Active Community Environments Initiative, www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/aces.htm and www.cdc.gov/healthylives

The Active Living Network, www.activeliving.org/.

The International City Management Association (ICMA), icma.org/activeliving.

Active Living by Design, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, www.activelivingbydesign.org/.

²⁰ On the Internet at www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/PDF/2005_bicycle_transportation_pedestrian_walkways_plan.pdf.

National Planning Resources on Smart Growth and Physical Activity

Pedestrian and bicycle information from the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center www.pedbikeinfo.org/ and the National Center for Bicycling and Walking www.bikewalk.org/.

The Smart Growth Network helps create national, regional, and local coalitions to support intelligent and sustainable growth at www.smartgrowth.org and www.epa.gov/smartgrowth

California's Local Government Commission has excellent resources on transportation and community design at www.lgc.org/index.html.

Several model land use codes are available for smaller communities. *Model Land Use Code for Colorado's Small Communities* at www.dola.state.co.us/smartgrowth/resources.htm and Oregon's *Model Development Code for Small Cities* at www.oregon.gov/LCD/TGM/publications.shtml.

National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program provides technical assistance grants. www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/

National Parks and Recreation Association's "Step Up to Health: It Starts in Parks" Initiative provides training and resources to parks professionals at www.nrpa.org/health.

State and Federal Funding

No funding was provided to implement ESSB 5186. However, there are some sources available as follows:

- WSDOT's Web site lists several sources of funds that can be use to fund these types of facilities at www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/Funding.htm.
- The Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council (IACC) database of infrastructure funding opportunities at www.infracfunding.wa.gov/ including funding from the Transportation Improvement Board at www.tib.wa.gov/default.asp.
- CTED planning grants for specific planning activities on a two-year cycle, and Emerging Issues grants of \$10,000 on specific emerging planning issues outside the normal grant cycle. Contact Anne Fritzel, Senior Planner, (360) 725-3064, annef@cted.wa.gov.
- Washington Traffic Safety Commission provides grant funding for traffic safety, school zone and law enforcement initiatives, <http://www.wtsc.wa.gov>. Contact Lynn Drake, Program Manager, (360) 586-3484, ldrake@wtsc.wa.gov.