



Section 1: Introduction

As bicycling and walking are increasing in popularity among youth and adults across America, they are becoming viable modes of non-motorized transportation.

Many urban areas experience roadway congestion, lack of parking, and stop-go movement in everyday traffic situations. These combined traffic situations create an excellent opportunity for bicycling and walking. Leisure time is becoming increasingly scarce due to a number of factors; specifically the increase in the normal work day because society is working more.

In today's society, there are benefits of bicycling and walking. The benefits are listed below.

- ✚ Reduce traffic congestion;
- ✚ Reduce air and noise pollution;
- ✚ Reduce wear and tear on roads;
- ✚ Reduce consumption of gasoline;
- ✚ Reduce crashes and property damage;
- ✚ Reduce the need for additional roads, travel lanes and parking; and
- ✚ Improving health and the quality of life.

Bicycling and walking to work and personal trips provides an enjoyable, efficient, and environmentally friendly method of incorporating exercise into today's hectic schedules. With this mind, the Georgia Department of Transportation along with Regional Development Centers (RDC) throughout the state, are looking to these transportation modes to relieve some strain of traffic in urban areas and providing a way of improving the quality of life for rural areas.

The Lower Chattahoochee Region

The Lower Chattahoochee RDC is the region's planning organization for an eight county area that includes the counties of Harris, Talbot, Muscogee, Chattahoochee, Stewart, Randolph, Quitman, and Clay. The Lower Chattahoochee RDC echoes the objective of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) in emphasizing bicycle and pedestrian transportation throughout the state. In order to make these strides in the Lower Chattahoochee region, the concept of cycling and walking as a non-motorized mode of transportation must be embraced by the local governments, advocacy groups, and partner agencies in the region.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement in bicycle and pedestrian planning is essential and works best when the community is involved from the beginning. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities can rarely be implemented to meet all of a community's needs. Choices that prioritize investment and citizen involvement are essential to determine the needs and desires of the community.

To successfully achieve this goal, a Public Involvement Process was developed. The Public Involvement Plan defines coordination and collaboration efforts between the LCRDC, general public, local governments, and advocacy groups. The initial public involvement in the development of the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Plan began when the LCRDC convened an oversight committee that included the appointment of a Planning Advisory Committee. The committee consisted of elected local government officials, chambers of commerce, and stakeholder groups. This partnership approach ensured that representatives from a variety of stakeholder groups with different areas of expertise could provide input and guidance on the



development of the plan. The Planning Advisory Committee provided valuable direction and guidance to the overall plan effort.

A series of public meetings were held throughout the region. Issues were raised during public meetings and by the Planning Advisory Committee. The primary concerns were the lack of facilities, shoulder width, pavement conditions, accommodation for cyclists on roadways and sidewalks throughout the region. Also discussed was the need to provide alternative facilities where there is no accommodation for cyclists and pedestrians. Another consistent concern was the lack of marketing and information about the region's existing bicycles and pedestrian routes and facilities.

Concluding the public meetings, the LCRDC evaluated and discussed with the PAC different alternatives in addressing the concerns of the region. Bicyclists are considered to be the primary users of the regional system. However, in developing the goals and objectives for the regional system, pedestrians were considered to be viable in the local municipalities. In addition to goals and objectives, several recommendations were discussed which included the creation of new routes for the extension and connectivity of existing routes, and the concentration of pedestrian travel within urban areas. Shorter trips and greater development densities make walking a feasible mode of transportation in urban areas. Other alternatives will be addressed throughout the plan.