

4. Bicycle System

Accomplishments Over the Past Five Years

The Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and its partner agencies continue to make progress in bicycle planning and implementation. San Antonio was first named a bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists in 2010 and again in 2014. In the last five years, San Antonio has reached several more milestones toward improving bicycle mobility in the Alamo Area. San Antonio City Council passed two bicycle-related ordinances: a Safe Passing ordinance that requires motorists to leave three feet when passing vulnerable road users, including bicyclists, and a Bike Light ordinance which requires a front white light and rear red reflector light visible when riding at night. Two other communities within the MPO's study area have also passed Safe Passing ordinances: Helotes and New Braunfels.

In 2011, San Antonio became the first city in Texas to initiate a bike share system, which today has grown to more than 50 stations and tallies 450 bike share trips per day on average. Through various funding sources, the bike share program continues to expand. In 2011, the City of San Antonio adopted the *San Antonio Bike Plan 2011 + Implementation Strategy* recommending 1,718 miles of bicycle facilities. It has added more than 100 of those miles to its on-road bicycle facilities in the last five years, bringing it up to more than 240 miles of bicycle routes and lanes in 2014. Additionally, 45 miles of multi-use paths make up its Howard W. Peak Greenway Trails System, and another 15 miles of multi-use paths along the San Antonio River are maintained by the San Antonio River Authority. New Braunfels is also installing bicycle facilities, with a Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2010) and a Hike and Bike Trail Plan (2012) to guide additional infrastructure. For its work on the Dry Comal Nature Trail in New Braunfels, the Comal Trails Alliance received the Conservation Award from the Texas Recreation and Park Society in November 2014.



The MPO's Bicycle Mobility Advisory Committee (BMAC), created in 1995, advises the MPO's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on technical matters and the Transportation Policy Board (TPB) on policy issues concerning bicycling. BMAC meets monthly and is composed of citizens as well as agency staff from the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG); Bexar County; the Cities of Boerne, New Braunfels, San Antonio, and Seguin; Texas Department of Transportation; VIA Metropolitan Transit; Greater Bexar County Council of Cities; bicycle clubs and organizations; and BikeTexas. MPO staff maintains a "BMAC Friends" e-mail distribution list of approximately 500 individuals to inform residents of local, state and federal bicycling issues and events.

The MPO's Walkable Community Program (WCP) continues to be integral to the work of the MPO's safety and active transportation programs. Three activities – Walkable Community Workshops, safety talks geared to adults and children, and bike rodeos – make up the program. In 2012, the MPO was awarded a Texas Traffic Safety grant for \$13,380 from the Texas Department of Transportation Traffic Operations division to continue a bicycle helmet distribution program begun under a previous grant program, Steps to a Healthier San Antonio, which concluded in 2009. The MPO was awarded a second Texas Traffic Safety grant in 2014 for \$9,000, making possible the continuation of further bike helmet distribution activities.

With data collected in 2009, the MPO produced a Road Diet Analysis in 2010 that identified 258 miles of roadway restriping and 90 miles of road diet candidates that could potentially increase bicycle lane miles in Bexar County. The MPO also produced a report in 2010 summarizing the results of a bicycle travel patterns survey taken of Bexar County residents. The survey found that about 325,000 residents use a bike on a monthly basis, which translates to almost one in five Bexar County residents. A Regional Bike and Pedestrian Planning Study is underway to catalog existing bicycling and walking conditions in the MPO's expanded study area and produce a regional vision and plan for the Cities of Boerne, New Braunfels, San Antonio, and Seguin and the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. (See page 4-9 for more information.) The 4th edition San Antonio Bike Map, a Transportation Enhancement-funded collaboration between the City of San Antonio and the MPO, was completed in late 2014.

Bicycle components are part of many projects in the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Since the development of the MPO's 2011-2014 TIP, 100 points (out of a possible score of 1,100) have been deducted from proposed added capacity and roadway rehabilitation projects that do not include accommodation for bicyclists.

Background

Active transportation, which includes walking and cycling, is growing in the Alamo Area, and educating the community about the benefits of a transportation system with such multimodal options is an integral part of the MPO's pedestrian and transportation planning process. While the region faces challenges of increasing traffic congestion, notable obesity and diabetes rates and looming air quality problems, active transportation modes like bicycling and walking will be a large part of the solution, beneficial to both individual and environmental health as well as the efficiency of the transportation network. Very importantly, pedestrian and bicycle networks that are accessible, direct and continuous have been shown to be economically beneficial to the neighborhoods around them and improve safety for everyone using the roadway.

Census data shows that walking and bicycling are still far outpaced by driving as the commute mode of choice in this region, but almost 325,000 residents of Bexar County use a bike every month, according to the MPO's Bicycle Travel Patterns Study (2010). This translates to almost one in five people all using a bike to get to a destination, stay fit, or recreate. It is vital for the MPO to help its partner agencies implement a transportation network that is physically, equitably and affordably accessible by all community members. The *San Antonio Bike Plan 2011 + Implementation Strategy* is the primary document considered in planning for bicycle facilities in Bexar County. In March 2012, the TPB unanimously approved a resolution (Figure 4.1) adopting the San Antonio Bike Plan and strongly encouraging decision makers within the study area to consider the implementation of bicycle facilities within their respective jurisdictions. The plan can be downloaded at: <http://www.sanantonio.gov/oep/sabikes/bicycleMP.aspx>. The MPO anticipates that the pending completion of the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Study will also be pivotal to helping the region envision and implement a connected active transportation network.

MPO Programs

Walk & Roll Program

The Walk & Roll Program is a regional effort that encourages residents to experience walking, cycling, transit or car/vanpooling instead of driving in a single occupancy vehicle. It acknowledges active transportation as viable options that can improve the health of the individual as well as the environment. Under this program, the MPO participates in AACOG's annual Walk & Roll Challenge, in which businesses and residents track usage of alternative transportation, and partners with the City of San Antonio's Risk Management Division to improve travel safety for all road users. In conjunction with the Division's defensive driving courses, MPO staff educates motorists about sharing the road with bicyclists and speaks at approximately 25 classes annually, reaching more than 1,000 City of San Antonio employees per year.

The Walk & Roll Program is particularly robust throughout the month of May, recognized as National Bike Month since 1956. With support from the MPO's transportation partners and the community, the Walk & Roll Rally averages over 300 participants each year with other Bike Month events educating and activating hundreds more. May 2014 marked the eighteenth anniversary of the MPO's Walk & Roll Program.

**Figure 4.1 San Antonio Bike Plan 2011 + Implementation Strategy Resolution
adopted by the Transportation Policy Board**



**A Resolution Adopting the
San Antonio Bike Plan 2011 +
Implementation Strategy**

WHEREAS, the San Antonio-Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is responsible for a multi-modal transportation planning process; and

WHEREAS, the MPO adopted the original Regional Bicycle Master Plan on August 31, 2004; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the San Antonio Bike Plan 2011 + Implementation Strategy is to create an efficient, region-wide bicycle network as well as prioritize bicycle facilities in an effort to create an integrated multi-modal transportation system; and

WHEREAS, in the Plan development, the City of San Antonio worked with multiple entities including the MPO's Bicycle Mobility Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from the Alamo Area Council of Governments, Bexar County, City of San Antonio, San Antonio River Authority, San Antonio Wheelmen, Texas Department of Transportation, VIA Metropolitan Transit, citizens and other community stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, the development of the Plan considered studies developed by the MPO including the Bicycle Route Suitability Study (2001), Road Diet Analysis (2010), Bicycle Travel Patterns Study (2010), and the Safety Study (on-going); and

WHEREAS, adoption and implementation of the Plan supports the:

- Overall mission statement of the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan, "Mobility 2035" adopted by the Transportation Policy Board on December 7, 2009;
- Vision statement, goals and objectives of the "Bicycle System" Chapter as adopted as part of the "Mobility 2035" on December 7, 2009
- Future population and employment growth scenario adopted by the Transportation Policy Board on March 23, 2009;
- "Complete Streets" resolution adopted by the MPO Transportation Policy Board on March 23, 2009;
- MPO's Walkable Community Program; and
- MPO's Walk & Roll Program

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the San Antonio-Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Policy Board, in order to provide safer transportation facilities for bicyclists, ensure all transportation options are available, to improve air quality, the quality of life, and health of residents in our communities, adopts the San Antonio Bike Plan 2011 + Implementation Strategy.

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the MPO strongly encourages decision makers to consider the implementation of bicycle facilities within their respective jurisdictions.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 5th day of March 2012.

Tommy Adkisson, Chair
San Antonio-Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Figure 4.2 Walk & Roll Rally 2014



Walkable Community Program

The Walkable Community Program (WCP) is available to neighborhood associations, religious organizations, Parent Teacher Associations, or a group of active citizens who identify a need within a geographic boundary. The WCP is comprised of three components: Walkable Community Workshops, safety classes for adults and children, and bicycle rodeos. The workshop reports are available on the MPO's website at www.alamoareampo.org. These reports document the process used for each workshop and assist in identifying where the greatest transportation needs exist within the study area. The workshops educate participants about the benefits of active transportation, improve awareness of the potential improvements within each study area, and providing the community with an opportunity for two-way communication with local agency staff.

Figure 4.3 Walkable Community Workshop



To publicize its Walk & Roll and Walkable Community Programs, MPO staff has created English and Spanish language brochures and videos describing the program, benefits of active transportation and biking and walking safety. The MPO participates in many community events to publicize its role in transportation planning and, in particular, its

bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts. The MPO is represented annually at events such as the City of San Antonio's Earth Day and Síclovías, San Antonio River Authority's Get Outdoors!, the City of Leon Valley's Earthwise Living Day, AACOG's Fresh Air Friday, and the Neighborhood resource Center's Neighborhood Conference.

Vision, Goals, and Objectives

The MPO has adopted the following vision statement for bicycling in the region:

The Alamo Area recognizes bicycling as a clean, healthy and affordable form of transportation and recreation. A comprehensive on-road and off-road bicycle network will make our community a place where bicycling will be desirable for trips of all kinds by all segments of the population.

The following achievable goals and objectives support the adopted vision for a bicycle friendly community.

- Goal 1 Institutionalize bicycling: recognize and incorporate bicycling as a significant and required element for all transportation, land use, and economic development planning.
 - Objective 1.1 Provide agency training opportunities and continue staff positions at local governmental and transportation agencies to implement bicycle facilities.
 - Objective 1.2 Consider bicycle facilities from the planning and scoping stages through the design and construction of all projects as well as during the review of subdivision and development plans.
 - Objective 1.3 Review all state- and federally-funded projects to ensure that quality bicycle accommodations are provided.
 - Objective 1.4 Continue to coordinate bicycle planning with other communities and agencies, including in the review of land development and transportation projects and studies.
 - Objective 1.5 Conduct periodic surveys of bicyclists in the MPO study area to determine bicycle travel patterns and other information useful in developing the local bicycle network.

- Objective 1.6 Continue to assist local agencies and community groups in identifying obstacles to and opportunities for safe bicycling in neighborhoods and corridors.
- Goal 2 Prioritize, fund, and implement bicycle facilities that will increase ridership. Facilities are the physical improvements to the region's bicycle infrastructure and include trails, bike lanes, and bicycle parking.
- Objective 2.1 Promote uniform facility design and implementation throughout the region.
 - Objective 2.2 Plan and prioritize reasonably direct routes between activity centers.
 - Objective 2.3 Continue to maintain and improve the quality and operation of on-road bike facilities. Encourage low-stress, protected on-road bicycle facilities such as cycle tracks and buffered bike lanes.
 - Objective 2.4 Continue the development of a regional off-road system. Examples include creek-based linear parks, shared use paths along utility easements, and Rails to Trails.
 - Objective 2.5 Connect existing bicycle facilities and eliminate gaps in the region's current bicycle network.
 - Objective 2.6 Continue updating and enhancing the database of all bicycle facilities and maintain a regional bicycle map. MPO staff should report regularly on implementation of bicycle facilities by its partner agencies.
 - Objective 2.7 Develop standards for bicycle parking in existing and new developments to include possible changes to local parking ordinances.
 - Objective 2.8 Continue to work with VIA Metropolitan Transit and Alamo Regional Transit to further integrate bicycling with transit.
- Goal 3 Make bicycling safer through education, encouragement, and enforcement: Grow the program to educate elected officials and the general public concerning the opportunities, benefits, and safety aspects of bicycling in the region.
- Objective 3.1 Work with the Bicycle Mobility Advisory Committee and other organizations to continue promoting bicyclist and motorist

safety and education outreach programs initiated by the MPO and/or its partner agencies.

Objective 3.2 Encourage agency partner employees to bike to work. Quality bicycle parking should be provided at agency offices.

Objective 3.3 Strengthen public education efforts about plans, projects and activities through the MPO's website, social media, BMAC Friends e-list, and printed publications.

Objective 3.4 Continue to support National Bike Month and other bicycling events in the region, under the umbrella of the Walk & Roll Program.

Goal 4 Find the funding: identify and secure local, state, federal, private, and grant funding to expand and improve bicycle facilities and programs in the region.

Objective 4.1 Identify funding for stand-alone bicycle facilities.

Objective 4.2 Encourage local governments to adopt preventive maintenance programs to extend the life of bicycle facilities.

Objective 4.3 Explore public-private partnerships to fund new and replacement bicycle facilities.

Greenway Trails Systems

The Howard W. Peak Greenway Trails System in the City of San Antonio is a growing network of multi-use hike and bike trails that wind through natural landscapes along creekways. There are currently 46 miles of developed greenway trails now open to the public along with approximately 1,200 acres of linear park creek-side open space. The Linear Creekway Parks Development Program, which provides sales tax funding for the land purchases and trails development, was approved by voters in 2000, 2005 and 2010. The current budget for trail development includes enough to build approximately 40 additional miles of trails.

Trails are now either built or planned for many of San Antonio's creeks, including the Salado, Leon, Huebner, Olmos, Huesta, Culebra, Alazan, Apache, Martinez, San Pedro, and the Medina River. The vision is to circle the City of San Antonio with a ring of trail systems. When the system is completed the network of trails, using creeks, neighborhood connections and the San Antonio River will total over 130 miles.

Future Bicycling Network: The Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning Study

In September 2014, the MPO started a Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning Study to help additional municipalities accomplish the vision and goals for bicycling in

the region. The study is being conducted with the aid of a consultant planning team who will identify existing biking and walking conditions in the cities of Boerne, New Braunfels and Seguin and prioritize projects for short-, intermediate- and long-term implementation. In the City of San Antonio, which is actively following recommendations made in the San Antonio Bike Plan 2011 + Implementation Strategy, the focus of the study will be on bicycling and pedestrian issues in the area encompassing the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park.

The study is following a timeline of seven core tasks and is scheduled to conclude in May 2015. Project management and coordination (Task 1) is ongoing and involves consultation with the Study Oversight Committee (SOC) during project milestones. Project initiation (Task 2) occurred in September 2014 with meetings of the SOC and with BMAC and the Pedestrian Mobility Advisory Committee (PMAC). At these meetings, the SOC and stakeholders discussed opportunities and challenges, received clarification of project objectives and expectations, defined general project deliverables and were introduced to the public involvement tools.

Task 3 involved developing a public involvement plan (PIP) which is being carried out through a series of public meetings meant both to request input on existing bike and pedestrian issues and educate residents about successful solutions to similar challenges implemented by other communities. Public input collected through an online survey and interactive map will be used to support the study's recommendations, which will stem from an assessment of existing conditions (Task 4), including traffic crash history and inventorying of bicycle and pedestrian networks.

The development of the draft study (Task 5) will present the methodology for recommending projects prioritized at both the municipal and regional levels. Recommended improvements will be provided in map and list form. Current mechanisms for implementing and funding will be evaluated and new strategies may be recommended, which will include (Task 6) non-infrastructure based methods for improving walking and biking through education, encouragement, and enforcement.

The final report (Task 7) will be composed of an Executive Summary highlighting the major recommendations of the study and sections covering the process for funding and implementing those recommendations and summarizing the specific facility recommendations for each community. A coordinated effort between numerous agencies, stakeholder groups and residents of the Alamo Area, the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Study will be a document that fosters the growing interest in bicycling in the communities of Boerne, New Braunfels and Seguin and guides policy necessary for and implementation of a safe, accessible and comprehensive bicycling network for the MPO study area.

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