

4. Bicycle Planning and Needs Assessment

Accomplishments Over the Past Five Years

Bicycle planning has been an emphasis area for the San Antonio – Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) over the past five years. Accomplishments include completion of the Regional Bicycle Master Plan, publication of the area's first bicycle route suitability map, installation of bicycle racks on all mainline buses, further progress on the local bicycle rack program, completion of phases of the Mission Trails project, secured funding for the Salado Creek trails program and increased participation in the annual Hike & Bike Month activities. Also, over the past five years, several miles of bicycle facilities have been added to the system. While the accomplishments are many, the San Antonio region continues to lag behind many other large cities in the area of bicycling.

Background

Throughout the development of the MPO's update to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), as well as in other activities undertaken over the past ten years, the citizens of this area continued to express their desire to have a comprehensive bicycle network. The City of San Antonio's Master Plan policies, which were approved in 1997, clearly communicate the desire that a comprehensive bicycle network of on-road bicycle facilities and off-road hike and bike trails be added to existing infrastructure as well as to new developments.

In August 2004, the MPO Transportation Policy Board adopted the Regional Bicycle Master Plan that is designed to serve as a guide as to where bicycle facilities should be implemented. Portions of this Bicycle Plan, including the vision, goals, and networks developed in the Bicycle Plan were used to create this chapter of the MTP. The Regional Bicycle Master Plan is considered to be an element of the MTP. A copy of the Regional Bicycle Master Plan is available through the MPO or is on the MPO's website at www.sametroplan.org.

The Regional Bicycle Master Plan fulfills a portion of the City of San Antonio's Master Plan and will assist local agencies in identifying what projects should include bicycle facilities when those projects are funded. In addition, the Bicycle Plan should be overlaid with roadway maintenance programs to help create the bicycle network.

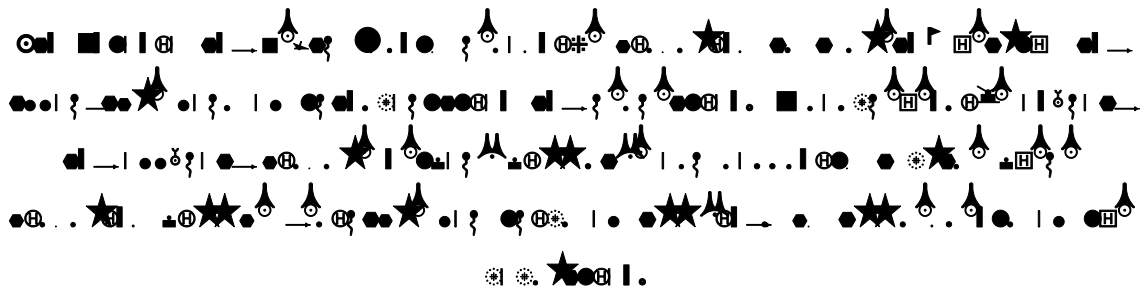
Therefore, the Regional Bicycle Master Plan is designed to be a guideline for the implementation of bicycle facilities throughout the City of San Antonio and Bexar County. As projects are designed and funding becomes available, bicycle facilities need to be considered and implemented. However, the intent of the Bicycle Plan is not to

demolish existing infrastructure in order to provide bicycle facilities but to retrofit as opportunities present themselves and through new development, expand the bicycle network through creating connectivity to and between new destinations of interest. The construction of a countywide bicycle network will result from careful planning and project integration.

The Regional Bicycle Master Plan, as part of the City's Master Plan, and in combination with the City of San Antonio's Unified Development Code (UDC) provides the structure, policy, programs and development guidance necessary to make the bicycle goals outlined in the City of San Antonio Master Plan a reality.

Although the San Antonio-Bexar County area does not have a long-standing history of implementing bicycle projects and promoting bicycle facilities, the area has made some great strides over the last decade. Regional leaders have begun to understand the importance of creating and maintaining a multi-modal transportation system. Various goals and objectives have now been identified to ensure that this area continues to develop and implement a comprehensive bicycle network.

Vision Statement



Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives provide for a 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 for the San Antonio/Bexar County region.

Objective 1.1 Create full-time Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator staff positions at the local governmental and transportation agencies.

Objective 1.2 Include bicycle transportation in the review process during the planning and design of projects as well as during the review of subdivision and development proposals to ensure proper inclusion of bicycle,

pedestrian and transit needs in plans, projects and design.

Objective 1.3 Coordinate bicycle planning with other communities and agencies through participation in the MPO's Bicycle Mobility Task Force.

Objective 1.4 Conduct periodic surveys of bicyclists in the San Antonio/Bexar County region to determine bicycle use patterns and collect other information useful in development of the local bicycle network.

Objective 1.5 Assist local agencies, neighborhood groups and user groups in developing future neighborhood and corridor plans for bicycling.

Goal 2 Build the Network to Increase Ridership: create a comprehensive on-road and off-road bicycle network throughout the San Antonio/Bexar County region.

Objective 2.1 Promote uniform facility design and implementation throughout the San Antonio/Bexar County area.

Objective 2.2 Plan and prioritize reasonably direct routes between major activity centers while emphasizing the use of collector streets to increase bicycle access throughout the urban area.

Objective 2.3 Maintain and improve the quality, quantity and operation of bikeway network facilities.

Objective 2.4 Create a regional off-road system of creek-based linear parks connected by hike and bike trails.

Objective 2.5 Connect existing bicycle facilities and eliminate gaps in the region's current bicycle network.

Objective 2.6 Establish and maintain a GIS database of all regional facilities and develop a regional bicycle facility map.

Objective 2.7 Develop standards for bicycle parking in existing and new land use development including possible changes to local parking ordinances.

Objective 2.8 Continue to work with VIA Metropolitan Transit to further integrate bicycling with the transit system.

Goal 3 Find the Funding: identify and secure local, state, federal and private funding to expand and improve bicycle transportation facilities and programs in the San Antonio/Bexar County region. Create a continuing local source for bicycle funding.

Objective 3.1 Identify and obtain adequate funding from local, state and federal sources for bicycle improvements to the bicycle network.

Objective 3.2 Seek grant sources for additional bicycle funding as well as private funding.

Goal 4 Make Bicycling Safer through Education and Enforcement: develop a program to educate elected officials and the general public concerning the opportunities, benefits, and safety aspects of bicycling in the San Antonio and Bexar County region.

Objective 4.1 Work with the MPO's Bicycle Mobility Task Force and other organizations to create and promote bicyclist and motorist safety and education outreach programs.

Objective 4.2 Improve bicycling safety through the enforcement of bicycle rules and regulations.

Objective 4.3 Promote greater respect for bicyclists by other roadway users with a continuous on-going "Share the Road" campaign.

Objective 4.4 Increase public information through the development of a regional interactive bicycle web site.

Objective 4.5 Continue to use Hike & Bike Month as a forum for education and promotion of bicycling activities.

Public Involvement and Community Support

Throughout the development of the San Antonio – Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) update to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) in 1994, 1999 and 2004, as well as in other activities undertaken over the past ten years, the citizenry continues to express the desire to have a comprehensive bicycle network.

In accordance with the MPO's public involvement procedures for planning studies, the MPO hosts at least one formal public meeting to solicit comments on all alternative strategies to be considered in the early stages of the significant

transportation study process. The MPO holds three public meetings throughout many of its planning studies.

Several transportation planning studies funded by the MPO have included a bicycle component supported by public involvement:

- Mission Trails Planning Study October 1993
- Community-Based Bicycle Planning Study April 1997
- Olmos Park Transportation Management Plan September 2001
- Bicycle Route Suitability Study October 2001
- Multi-Modal Downtown Alternatives Analysis April 2003
- Brooks City-Base Infrastructure Development Plan May 2003
- East Corridor Multi-Modal Alternatives Plan May 2003

On April 26, 2004 the MPO held a public meeting to receive comments on the draft Regional Bicycle Master Plan. Approximately 70 persons attended the meeting. Attendees were asked to comment on the goals and objectives and the recommended bicycle corridors. The meeting input has been incorporated into the Regional Bicycle Master Plan.

Transportation Agency Initiatives

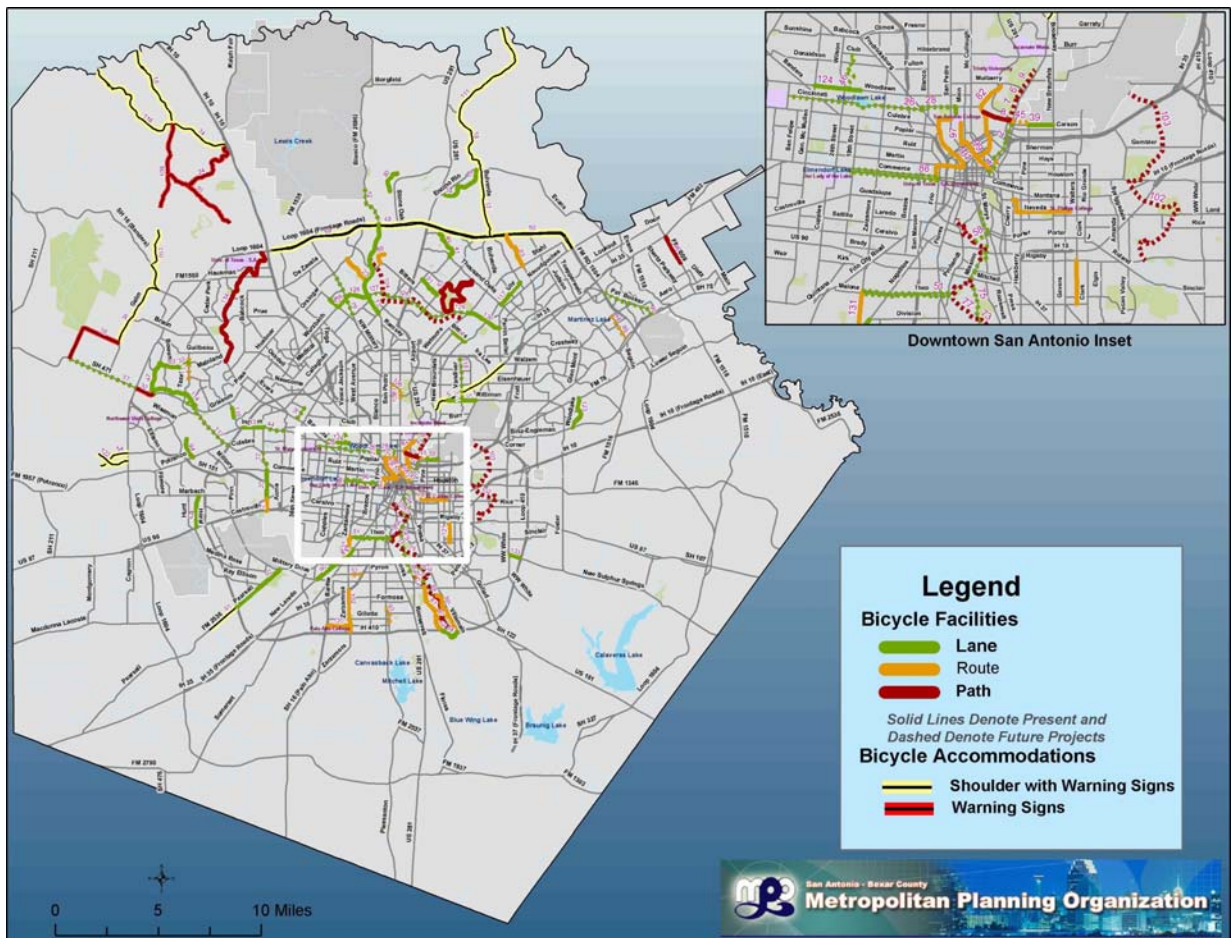
The City of San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas Department of Transportation and VIA Metropolitan Transit have implemented a number of initiatives over the past several years that support the further creation of bicycle amenities. Some of these initiatives include the installation of bicycle racks city-wide, including bicycle facilities within creekways, installation of bicycle warning signs on roads, incorporation of bicycle facilities on new construction and rehabilitation projects and the installation of bicycle racks on buses. A complete list of initiatives can be found in the Regional Bicycle Master Plan.

Bicycle Network Development

Existing and Committed Bicycle Facilities

Over the last decade, the San Antonio-Bexar County region has added several bicycle facilities to the area's transportation system. The map in figure 4.1 depicts those types of facilities and their locations. As shown in the legend of the map, facilities have been placed in three different categories: bicycle lanes, routes, and paths. Where the right-of-way does not exist to add these types of bicycle amenities, two types of accommodations have been added to improve the safety of bicyclists, including shoulders with warning signs and warning signs along busy roadways. It is important to note that this map not only depicts existing projects, but also projects that have some type of funding commitment and are expected to be completed in the near future.

Figure 4.1 Existing and Funded On and Off-Road Bicycle Facilities

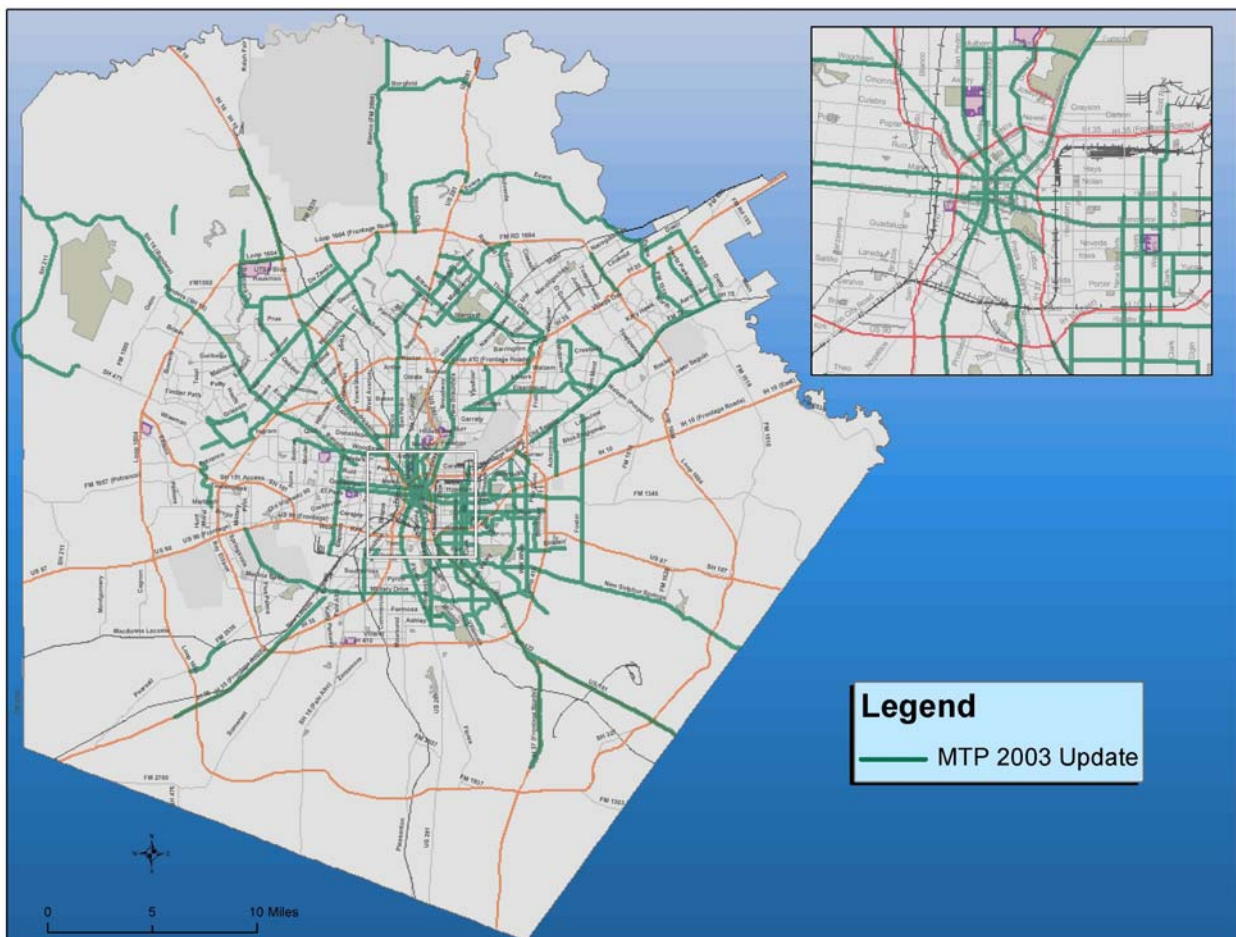


Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update - Public Involvement

The MPO and its partner agencies have undergone various public input sessions to gauge the public's interest in the development of bicycle facilities in the region.

In October 2003, approximately 150 citizens and agency staff participated in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update process for the development of this Plan. Participants were asked to look at the existing bicycle network and add facilities where they felt they were needed. The following bicycle network resulted from these citizen and technical work group sessions.

Figure 4.2 Metropolitan Transportation Plan – Public Involvement Network

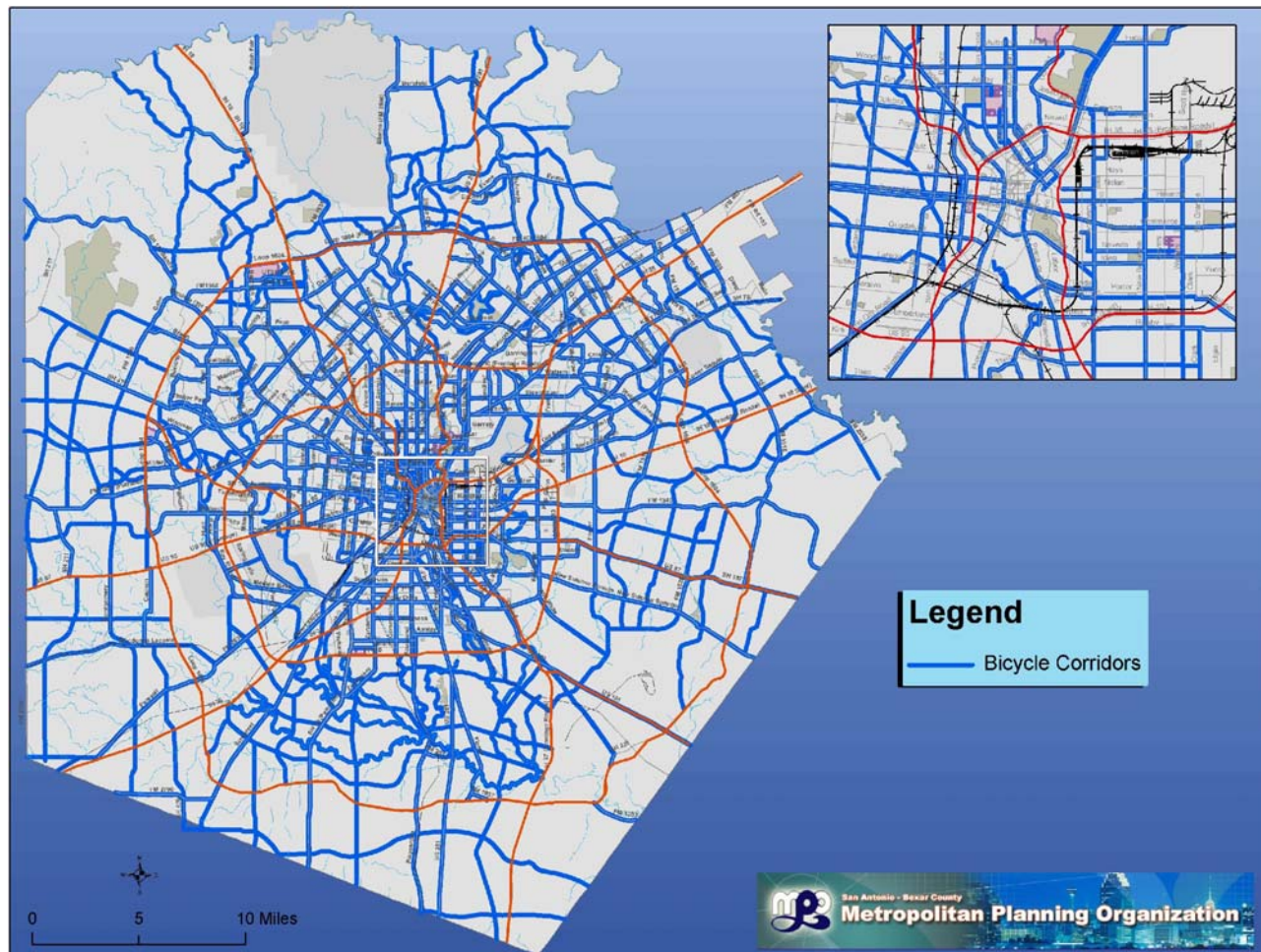


Recommended Bicycle Master Plan Network

Over the last several years, the MPO and its partner agencies have been meeting to develop a comprehensive bicycle network that could be used as the blue print for development in the region.

The total recommended bicycle network is comprised of existing and programmed bicycle facilities plus the bicycle portions of the previously mentioned plans and studies. It represents 10 years of agency and public input efforts to achieve the citizens' desires as stated in the City of San Antonio's Master Plan.

Figure 4.3 Recommended Bicycle Network



Funding the System

Financing bicycle facility construction is undoubtedly the greatest challenge in building the system but efforts that have started should be continued: 1) committing 6% of the Surface Transportation Program – Metropolitan Mobility funds for bicycle facilities, including bicycle facilities in new roadway construction projects and rehabilitation projects, and 2) local programs (restriping, bike routes, paved shoulders, and signage).

Existing funding programs could be used to build the bicycle system: 1) Community Development Block Grants, 2) City of San Antonio General Fund, 3) General Obligation Bonds, 4) City of San Antonio Neighborhood Accessibility and Mobility Program and 5) the State of Texas' Transportation Enhancement Program.

New financing opportunities should also be pursued. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) developer-built facilities, 2) public/private partnerships, 3) Advanced Transportation District, 4) bicycle licensing fees/registration fees (exclusively for bike facilities), and 5) vehicle registration fees. These financing strategies could be used to develop a local "Safe Routes to Schools" program.

Summary

Bicycling is a cost effective, energy efficient, clean, and healthy way to travel. With the growing concerns of congestion, air quality and the public interest in promoting alternative transportation modes, the adoption of policies that encourage alternate transportation modes will aid in reducing congestion, improving air quality, and enhancing the community's quality of life. The principle of an efficient travel network is to develop a system of complementary transportation modes that support the safe and viable movement of people, goods, and services.

The Regional Bicycle Master Plan and the City of San Antonio's adopted Master Plan support this objective. It encourages transportation options, which emphasize convenience, safety, environmental quality and efficiency. The focus is to expand the overall capacity of the transportation system by including bicycling as a viable transportation mode in the design of the city's new infrastructure and retrofitting the existing network.