

VIII. Recommendations

The following recommendations will assist in the successful implementation of this Plan's Vision, Goals, and objectives and will require further consideration by City staff and Council.

1. Maintenance and Mapping of PCR Data.

Now that the Pavement Condition Rating (PCR) is complete and includes sidewalk and ADA ramp information, City staff should be assigned to enter in new information from as-builts and City Public Works projects so that new sidewalks and roads, as well as relevant maintenance projects are tracked and included in the City's inventory. This could be done every 1 to 2 weeks and should not take more than 1-2 hours depending on the amount of new data to be entered. This will facilitate future PCR efforts (recommended every 2-3 years) taking less time and being more effective.

PCR data will be managed as a geodatabase on the City's GIS system. It is therefore important that only key staff have the ability to update information and that a protocol be established for making any changes in the PCR.

From this geodatabase, several maps should be completed and made available digitally to all departments and the public:

- The Pedestrian Plan indicating "needed linkages" where the fee-in-lieu option is not available.
- PCR Map of ADA compliant sidewalks and ramps.

Currently there is a team of staff from the City Engineering and Public Works Department who are finalizing the PCR, and those departments can task key staff and establish protocols for managing the PCR most effectively.

2. Amend UDO and/or Standards and Specifications Manual to include greenways, ADA and transit needs into Sidewalk Regulations and Technical Review Processes.

While City staff already works with local developers as part of technical review processes to identify opportunities to improve the pedestrian environment in site planning, there is no specific guidance in the UDO to address greenways, removal of sidewalk barriers or other needs beside sidewalks. The UDO could be amended to include provisions, or to reference provisions in the Standards and Specifications Manual that:

- A) *Specify additional improvements to the pedestrian environment and ADA compliance.* Installation of crosswalks, ADA compliant ramps, replacement of non-compliant ramps, and the removal or accommodation of obstacles such as newspaper boxes, mail-boxes or utility poles, in sidewalk design are as important to the pedestrian environment as the sidewalk itself. If a developer builds a new 5' sidewalk to the City specifications, but then places a utility pole in the middle of it, rendering the sidewalk un-passable to wheelchairs, then the sidewalk loses its effectiveness as a facility.

Location of utility poles and any other structures or elements to be placed in the sidewalk must be placed in such a way, or the sidewalk built to maintain, a minimum of 48" in width for pedestrian and wheelchair "through-traffic" and installation or replacement of ADA compliant ramps should be included in the construction of new sidewalks.

- B) *Include flexibility and/or requirements to obtain right-of-way and trail construction for greenways identified in the adopted Greenways Master Plan.* If a parcel abuts or includes an identified greenway corridor, developers are asked to include provision for a trail easement of a minimum 30' in width, but actual alignment and placement of the trail within the property should be flexible. Depending on the parcel and the greenway corridor location, construction of a greenway trail could substitute for some or all required sidewalk as long as pedestrian connectivity is maintained. If parcel is on both the Greenways Master Plan and is a "Needed Linkage," then there should be some flexibility for providing a trail instead of a sidewalk or in building a sidewalk of wider design.
- C) *Provide incentives or requirements for transit stop amenities along transit routes.* If a required sidewalk is also on a bus route, additional sidewalk space or landing should be designed in coordination with City staff to accommodate a transit stop.
- D) *These types of requirements could be balanced with bonuses on parking and/or landscaping requirements or other incentives for incorporating additional pedestrian amenities, transit stops or additional greenway and sidewalk connections.* If for example a developer's site is on the Greenway Master Plan and the City would like to get a 30' easement and construction of a 10' trail as part of the development plan, then the developer could make up for that loss and additional cost to them by providing an equitable exchange in parking requirements and/or landscaping requirements. Similarly, if a bus pull out and stop is considered appropriate for the location of that development, the needed area taken from the lot could be made up in equal or greater amounts by reductions in parking or landscaping requirements.

City Engineering should work with the Planning staff and Planning and Zoning Commission to determine the most effective and equitable ways of integrating other elements beside sidewalks – specifically, crosswalks, signals, curb cuts, greenways, or transit stops -- that improve the pedestrian environment while creating "win/win" scenarios for the developer and the City.

3. Update the Fee-in-Lieu price structure once the City sidewalk crew has completed a year of work.

Currently the following fees which were developed in 2000, are applied if fee-in-lieu of sidewalks is approved and are listed in the Fees and Charges Manual:

5' Concrete Sidewalk:	\$20.00/Linear Foot
5' Brick Sidewalk:	\$65.00/LF
Railing:	\$11.50/LF
Retaining Wall:	\$28.00/SF
Curb and gutter:	\$17.30/LF

These fee amounts are out-of-date and should be revised to reflect today's costs. For example, based on work completed in the past year by the City, the current estimate for the new City sidewalk crew for construction of a five-foot wide sidewalk is \$26.30/linear foot – over \$6.00 more per linear foot than is charged through the fee-in-lieu program.

Once the crew has a season of work under their belts, more specific unit costs that accurately reflect current construction costs can be developed for sidewalks, the additional elements currently priced out, and the addition of ADA ramps into the list of fees. These changes should be incorporated as revisions in the Fees and Charges Manual once the Public Works Department has a high degree of confidence in the unit costs their crews are experiencing in the field.

4. Establish other local funding sources in addition to *fee-in-lieu* revenues and/or annual City budget allocations.

At our current rate of build and funding levels, the City will need 30 years to complete the sidewalk network (not including greenways). This does not include addressing on-going maintenance needs, which in past years have taken over half of the annual sidewalk allocation. To truly make advancements in our pedestrian network as well as to maintain it, the City must find a way for more significant and sustained investment. City Council should direct staff to research other sources of local revenue for pedestrian infrastructure as part of the budgeting process and the feasibility of developing another approach to meeting pedestrian safety and access needs.

In addition, opportunities for voluntary contributions of funds or rights-of-way should be developed. The Parks and Greenways Foundation is a great way for people to contribute to, and be recognized for, greenway development, but there is no similar mechanism for other pedestrian improvements. Areas such as 191 and 240 have numerous hotels, restaurants and shopping areas, but no sidewalks (these areas were developed either before the sidewalk requirements were put in place and/or were outside of the City's jurisdiction when they were built). Local businesses such as these may be willing to contribute to pedestrian infrastructure that increases safety and accessibility for their patrons in return for some form of recognition.

Local citizens, neighborhood associations and other interest groups may be interested in contributing to sidewalk development in certain areas if there were a known format for them to do so. This program could provide recognition such as a plaque or sticker for participants, and opportunities to create public-private partnerships to develop sidewalks in areas that need them.

5. Work through the MPO and with the NCDOT Division Office to develop a Sidewalk Policy for ETJ (or JPA Areas if designated) who request assistance.

Many areas just outside of Asheville are part of existing extraterritorial jurisdiction may eventually be annexed. Often these areas are urbanized and have the density to justify pedestrian infrastructure but no means of implementing a municipal agreement with NCDOT to establish them. NCDOT will generally not install sidewalks along state roads in unincorporated areas where the DOT cannot execute a municipal agreement. In the case of Emma, neighborhoods surrounding Emma Elementary School are high density and highly transit dependent. Emma Community Resource Center representatives came to the Pedestrian Forum and approached City staff to explore development of a sidewalk system that would connect the school and community center to the neighborhood while making transit stops safer.

A mechanism whereby areas within the City's ETJ can develop agreements, or in effect "hire" the City or other acceptable entity to develop and maintain sidewalks and work out the necessary agreements – cost sharing, encroachment, and maintenance – with NCDOT on their behalf. This policy could be a good model for other areas in the MPO region. MPO staff should work with the NCDOT Divisions 13 and 14 to determine an approach or policy to sidewalk construction in urbanized, unincorporated areas. Criteria could include:

- Request is initiated by the local neighborhood;
- Right-of-Way exists or is provided by property owners;
- Area of request falls within an incorporated jurisdiction's ETJ (or JPA); and
- County agrees to enter into an inter-local agreement with the municipality for the cost-share and maintenance of the facility.

6. Incorporate Promotion and Improvement of Pedestrian Activity into the new City TDM program

The recognition program recommended above could be promoted in conjunction with the City's new Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategy and managed as part of overall TDM marketing and public awareness efforts. The TDM campaign that the City will begin in conjunction with the new hiring of a TDM coordinator, should tie into efforts of other organizations such as Healthy Buncombe and the Asheville Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force to ensure widespread community recognition and promotion for pedestrian improvements and to encourage walking for transportation.

Additionally, the TDM coordinator should work closely with the City Traffic Engineer and Transit Director to promote walking and identify opportunities for improving pedestrian safety and infrastructure as part of the development of customized TDM plans for local businesses. The initiation of a Transportation Demand Management Program locally creates a wealth of opportunities to promote pedestrian activity, develop improvements to the intermodal nature of the transportation system, and to generally educate the public and promote new transportation and commuter opportunities.

7. Formalize an inter-departmental "Greenway and Enhancements Team" or establish a staff coordinator that manages right-of-way acquisition, grant management, trail design and development.

Currently an informal group of staff from Parks and Recreation, Community Development, City Engineering and the MPO work together to acquire right-of-way and to move greenway projects along. With so many projects coming on line, the workload involved in meeting federal guidelines for

right-of-way acquisition and design (such as when TEA-21 or NCDOT Bicycle Program funding is used) and overall project management will increase. Formally assigning a team or person specifically for this process could improve internal communication and implementation rate of Enhancement funded projects.

Accordingly, it is critical that these projects also be coordinated with on-going sidewalk construction and priority projects so that greenways and sidewalks work together to improve connectivity. It is also important that City resources within different departments – particularly Parks and Recreation, Public Works, Engineering, and Planning – work together to share information and maximize opportunities to share in planning, construction costs, or other needs.

8. Establish policies for implementing the City of Asheville Pedestrian and Greenways Plans, City Standards and Specifications for sidewalk construction and Access Management into NCDOT improvements and projects.

NCDOT has minimum design guidelines for use in their projects. Generally, this calls for a 5' sidewalk with a 2' wide planted strip between the sidewalk and the curb. The City of Asheville Standard calls for a minimum of a 5' planted strip between the sidewalk and the curb, 8' sidewalks in certain commercial areas, and a 6' minimum width on sidewalks that abut the curb – where there is no planted strip. In order to have consistency in local design and planning within the City, The City should ask NCDOT to meet City specifications as provided in the Asheville Standards and Specifications Manual, even if it requires the City to assist with some additional cost.

A City Policy should also exist to request NCDOT to include pedestrian signals and more visible crosswalks (i.e. zebra striped or patterned crosswalks) at signalized intersections as part of any road projects on priority thoroughfares within the City. This would improve pedestrian safety along key corridors and be consistent with NCDOT's own policies regarding Access Management.

An Access Management Policy should place controls on driveway access and cuts, channeling traffic into specified and/or controlled intersections. This is usually accomplished with dedicated turn lanes in combination with medians, both of which make the pedestrian environment safer by making traffic move more predictably. It also creates safer pedestrian crossings by controlling traffic movements and establishing a center island that allows pedestrians a safe place to wait when caught mid-crossing.