

Burlington Walk-Bike Council Go For Gold Priorities

May 2014

The Burlington Walk-Bike Council strongly believes that Burlington has great potential for increasing walking and biking both for transportation and recreation. Our goal is to make Burlington a world-class walking and biking city. Being certified as a Gold Bike-Friendly Community and as a Gold Walk-Friendly Community is one way to measure success towards the goal, although it is not itself the goal.

The following document includes some of the Walk-Bike Council's recommended priorities for increasing walking and biking in our community. It includes a brief discussion of the key elements required for success and the overall goals, a prioritized list of major projects to achieve those goals, and a list of major projects that are already in progress. The list of projects is divided into three categories - short-term engineering and infrastructure projects, medium-term engineering and infrastructure projects, and non-engineering projects - and Top Priorities are identified in each category.

Elements of Success

While it is important to identify particular projects and priorities, it is important also to identify the key elements essential to any effort to promote walking and biking. These are Safety, Accessibility, and Motivation.

Safety

The primary prerequisite for increasing walking and biking in the City of Burlington (or anywhere) is safety, both real and perceived. While some people will bike in traffic and will brave even crowded roads, many more people are daunted by current road conditions in many places. Some of the most important corridors and routes in Burlington do not feel safe to ride on for most people. Safety is also a major concern for people who would like to walk, especially when crossing traffic and especially for those whose mobility is limited. Another aspect of safety for bikers is having a secure place to store their bikes and gear, protected from theft, vandalism, and weather.

The primary route to improved safety for both walking and biking is through improvements to infrastructure, including sidewalks and crossings, protected bikeways, roundabouts, and secure bike parking. In addition, enforcement and education can play a significant role in improving safety.

Accessibility

Another critical element of success for any effort to increase biking and walking is convenient access to biking and walking facilities and to desired destinations. One of the draws for walking and biking, compared to driving (and public transit), is the ability to go straight where you want to go. Having to go out of one's way, in contrast, is a significant deterrent for many people.

Infrastructure improvements must therefore take this into account by ensuring that safe routes for walking and biking are placed where people want to go, and get people efficiently from place to place without significant detours. This means ensuring that they are continuous (without gaps where bicycle or pedestrian facilities disappear or are reduced), and it may also include adding cut-throughs where travel is currently blocked. Bicycle storage also needs to be prominently and centrally located. Sidewalks and street crossings should be frequent, accessible to those with reduced mobility, and conveniently located, and pedestrians should be able to cross with a minimum of waiting time. Finally, routes should be clearly marked both on the street and on readily accessible maps.

Motivation

Another barrier to more widespread walking and biking is the dominant car culture, in which people are accustomed to driving to get where they want to go. To increase walking and biking it is thus important to motivate people to change their behavior through a variety of encouragement activities. These may include special events and programs, Safe Routes to Schools or other promotional campaigns, incentives for commuters, discounts at local businesses, public art and design, historical markers, and many other ideas.

Goals

The overall goal for this effort is to make Burlington a truly walk-friendly and bike-friendly community and to increase the actual number of people walking and biking. This means substantially improving conditions for walking and biking in the city. Based on the primary elements of success (Safety, Accessibility, and Motivation), the required conditions for meeting this overall goal include the following:

- A well-maintained continuous city-wide network of sidewalks and pedestrian paths, with frequent, safe, and convenient crossings.
- A well-maintained continuous city-wide network of protected bike routes, particularly on major arteries and in the downtown area, with safe intersection design.
- Abundant and accessible bike parking throughout the city, with an emphasis on secure and weather-protected bike parking facilities at major destinations.
- Policies, education, and infrastructure that encourage safe driving behavior, including appropriate speeds and respect for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- A variety of events, policies, and programs that encourage walking and biking.

Top Priorities

While Burlington has already made significant progress in achieving the goals identified above, there are still many gaps and needs for improvement to the existing conditions. The Burlington Walk-Bike Council has therefore identified a number of Top

Priority strategies, projects and actions for achieving the overall goal of a walk-friendly and bike-friendly community, divided into three categories by type and time-frame.

Strategies for promoting walking and biking are often divided into 5 categories, known as the 5 E's: Engineering & Infrastructure, Encouragement, Education, Enforcement, and Evaluation & Planning. Because of the importance of Engineering & Infrastructure in meeting the goals of the Go For Gold project, we identified two separate lists of Top Priorities in that category, in both the short term (1-2 years) and medium term (3-5 years). We have also identified our Top Priorities among the many other types of non-engineering projects, including Encouragement, Education, Enforcement, and Evaluation and Planning.

Improvements in Engineering and Infrastructure - short term (1-2 years)

- Demonstration Projects: Perform at least one long-term demonstration project each of cycle track and roundabouts to show and test how they work, and to build support for their inclusion in more comprehensive upgrades.
- Secure Bike Parking:
 - Install Secure, weather-protected Bicycle Parking (lockers) at the new Transit Center, at the Airport, and at other transit hubs, and
 - Modify zoning codes to require secure bike parking for residential and commercial developments.
- Sidewalk Repair: Increase the sidewalk repair budget and capacity to erase the current backlog of sidewalks requiring repair

Improvements in Engineering and Infrastructure - medium term (3-5 years)

- Attended Bike Parking: Establish an indoor, secure, Attended Bike Parking facility located close to Church St. and the transit station, with capacity for 150 bicycles, lockers, and shower.
- Crosswalk Spacing: Create a standardized precedent for the maximum distance between two crosswalks. Add crosswalks as needed once the standard has been set, including bumpouts, RRFB flashing signs, or HAWK signs as appropriate.
- Main St. Improvements: Complete Corridor Study for Main St., and follow up by making recommended improvements, incorporating ideas from Plan BTV, protected bike lanes, roundabouts, sidewalk upgrades, safe crossings, traffic calming, and other bike-ped improvements.

Improvements in non-Engineering Categories

(Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, and Evaluation and Planning)

- DPW Bike-Ped Staffing: Increase staffing levels for Bicycle-Pedestrian Planning at the Burlington Department of Public Works to provide additional capacity for planning and management of improvements to infrastructure for bicycles and pedestrians
- Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan: Develop a comprehensive Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan, either stand-alone or as a part of the overall city transportation plan
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM): Encourage more employers to create walk/bike-to-work incentives if they do not have them already.

Priorities Already In Progress

The following high priority projects have been left off of the main BWBC Priority list because it is our understanding and expectation that these are already underway. **It is critical to ensure that all of these projects are completed as expected in order to meet our goals for improved walkability and bikeability in Burlington.**

Bike/Ped Accommodations on the Champlain Parkway

The existing plans for the Champlain Parkway do not currently include reasonable accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians. However, it is the BWBC's understanding and expectation that the plans will be revised in short order to incorporate improvements for bicycles and pedestrians. Examples of key elements include roundabouts at some intersections, signalized crosswalks, and a separate bikeway end-to-end, either as sidepath and/or cycle track. Updating the plans must take place immediately if the Champlain Parkway is moving forward. If the Champlain Parkway is NOT built, then the city should establish a plan for making these bike-ped improvements on the Pine St. corridor.

Corridor Studies and Improvements

- North Ave.: A Corridor Study for North Avenue is currently underway. It is our expectation that the final recommendations will include substantive improvements to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian concerns, such as protected bike lanes, roundabouts, sidewalk upgrades, safe crossings, traffic calming, and other bike-ped improvements. It is further our expectation that the Study will be followed up by implementation of these recommended improvements.
- Colchester Ave.: It is our understanding that CCRPC has recently granted funding for implementation of the recommendations from the Colchester Ave. corridor study regarding the intersection of Colchester Ave., Riverside Dr., and Barrett St.
- Winooski Ave.: It is our understanding that the City is initiating a Corridor Study for North and South Winooski Ave. It is our expectation that the final recommendations will include substantive improvements to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian concerns, such as protected bike lanes, roundabouts, sidewalk upgrades, safe crossings, traffic calming, and other bike-ped improvements as appropriate. It is further our expectation that the Study will be followed up by implementation of these recommended improvements. The section of S. Winooski between Pearl St. and Main St. is especially critical to address.

Safe Routes to Schools Plans

- North Ave.: It is our understanding that the City is currently working on implementing the improvements recommended in the 2008 Safe Routes to School plan on North Ave.

- Champlain School: It is our understanding that the City is currently working on making improvements to street crossings on Lucust St. and Birchcliff Parkway as recommended in Champlain School Safe Routes to School plan.

Other Projects

- Bike Path Repair: A central portion of the Waterfront Bike Path is currently funded for repair and upgrade, starting this fall.
- Bike Lockers: It is our understanding that well marked and easily accessible bike storage lockers with electronic keys are currently planned for installation on Cherry St. near the parking garage for Burlington Town Center mall.
- Wayfinding Plan: It is our understanding that the City is currently working on implementation of the existing Wayfinding plan for Burlington.
- Open Streets: We have recently established a plan for an Open Streets event in September 2014 - an event at which a main street is closed to through traffic and only accessible to pedestrians or bikers. It is our expectation and hope that the success of this event will lead to establishment of at least two annual Open Streets events.

Other Priorities

The Burlington Walk-Bike Council also identified a number of other projects that did not make it onto our Top Priority list. While they are not as critical as the projects identified above, these are also important for increasing walking and biking in Burlington and should be pursued in parallel.

Other short term priorities for improvements in Engineering and Infrastructure

- Crosswalks: Improve visibility of crosswalks throughout the city, including
 - ensure that the paint remains visible throughout the year
 - add bumpouts to slow traffic and reduce the crossing distance
 - add RRFB flashing lights at crosswalks on high volume and high speed streets throughout the city.
- Crossing Signals: Change policy to:
 - have a leading phase on pedestrian crossing signals downtown
 - have automatic crossing instead of push button generated crossing light
- Bike Racks: Ensure that there are accessible, convenient bike racks throughout the city, including at all public buildings and in all city parks, as well as major public destinations.
- Traffic Calming: Add traffic calming and other features to key locations throughout city to encourage driving at or below speed limit
- Waterfront Bike Path: Perform repair and upgrade for portions of waterfront bike path that are not currently budgeted/planned
- Maintain Bikeways: Ensure that all on-street bike lanes and markings are maintained in a safe and visible condition:
 - ensure that the paint remains visible throughout the year

- ensure that bike lanes, side paths, and sides of major roads without bike lanes, are maintained to ensure safe bicycle passage, including being free of debris, potholes, and sunken storm grates

Other medium term priorities for improvements in Engineering and Infrastructure

- Rest of Bike Path: Evaluate and perform repairs and upgrades for the bike path in Ethan Allen Park, alongside Rte. 127, in the Burlington Intervale, and other locations not covered by the existing repair plan for waterfront
- Roundabouts: Install roundabouts at key intersections throughout the city
- Mall Pass-Through: Open up path through Mall from Cherry St. to Bank St. at Pine St. (or nearby) for pedestrians and bikes, as envisioned in Plan BTV
- Shelburne St. and St. Paul St. Improvements: Complete Corridor Study for Shelburne St. and St. Paul St., and follow up by making recommended improvements, incorporating protected bike lanes, roundabouts, sidewalk upgrades, safe crossings, traffic calming, and other bike-ped improvements.
- Willard and Union St. Improvements: Complete Corridor Studies for North and South Willard St., and North and South Union St., and follow up by making recommended improvements, incorporating protected bike lanes, roundabouts, sidewalk upgrades, safe crossings, traffic calming, and other bike-ped improvements.
- Additional Improvements: Complete Corridor Studies for additional major corridors in the city, including North St., Manhattan Dr., Battery St., Prospect St., and Flynn Ave. These studies should be followed up by making recommended improvements, incorporating protected bike lanes, roundabouts, sidewalk upgrades, safe crossings, traffic calming, and other bike-ped improvements.
- Secure Bike Parking in Parks: Ensure that all major park facilities have secure bike parking that is accessible to the main activity of that park
- Champlain School Safe Routes: Plan and implement additional recommendations from the Champlain School Safe Routes to School plan

Other high priorities in non-Engineering Categories

- Driver education: Ensure that regular driver education classes incorporate pedestrian and bike safety issues, and provide targeted education to professional drivers (including truck drivers, city employees, bus drivers) on sharing the roads with bikers and pedestrian safety.
- Car Traffic Enforcement: Improve enforcement of car traffic laws - focused on speed, giving room for bikes, yielding to pedestrians
- Accident Reduction Plan: The city should develop and carry out a specific plan for reduction of pedestrian/car and bicycle/car accidents and fatalities, AKA Vision Zero
- Expert Consultants: City departments (DPW, Parks, CEDO, Planning and Zoning) should establish a policy ensuring that all development and planning projects include expert biking and walking facility consultants, and in particular that roadway projects include consultants that are familiar with roundabouts.
- Safe Routes To Schools: Ensure that all Burlington schools take part in Safe Routes To Schools programs and promote walking and biking to school, and ensure that Safe Routes to Schools evaluations are undertaken for all schools

- Walk the City: Develop a “Walk the City” map/brochure (like “Cycle the City”) with routes laid out for safe, reasonable walks downtown and elsewhere in the city, with places of interest highlighted.
- Bike Repair Station: Establish more bike repair stations within the community like the one at Local Motion; Healthy living is willing to donate them, but the City must install them.
- Evaluate Bikeability and Walkability: Perform regular evaluations of walking and biking in the Greater Burlington area. This would include surveys of the perceived safety and convenience of biking and walking in different areas, as well as assessments of walking and biking behavior. This information can be used both to gauge success of efforts to increase walking and biking, as well as to target areas for improvement.
- Bike Route Signage: Purchase and install bike route signs in remaining parts of the city
- Mountain Biking Park: Create a sanctioned mountain biking park within Burlington
- Formalize BWBC: Formalize the Burlington Walk-Bike Council as a part of city government, with review function similar to other advisory boards

Lower priorities in non-Engineering Categories

- Bike Maintenance Day: Establish an annual Bike Maintenance Day event , with equipment, classes on bike maintenance, assistance with making sure a bike is in safe operating condition, etc.. This could be a stand-alone event or partner with existing event, in conjunction with bike parking. Single event or on-going (like the farmer's market)
- Improve Streetscape: Add public art, landscaping, and other amenities throughout the city to improve the pedestrian and cyclist experience, encourage walking, and engage people in their environment
- Parcourse: Add one or more parcourses (fitness trails) in city parks
- Bikes Cross With Pedestrians: Change city ordinances to allow bicycles to cross with pedestrian signals
- Bike-Sharing Program: Develop a public bike-sharing program similar to those in Montreal, Boston, and New York City, or (more size-appropriate) Aspen, CO, and Spartanburg, SC.
- Bicycle Friendly Businesses: Promote and assist businesses in applying for and achieving Bicycle Friendly Business status
- Bike Traffic Enforcement: Improve enforcement of bike traffic safety laws, focused on stopping at intersections
- Walking Event: Create an annual event with a walking focus, perhaps similar to the “Winooski on Foot” event.
- Safety Education Campaign: Create a broad-based safety education campaign to encourage safe road behavior by both drivers and bikers, and to promote mutual respect and understanding