

United States Department of Transportation Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations

Signed on March 11, 2010 and announced March 15, 2010

Purpose

The United States Department of Transportation (DOT) is providing this Policy Statement to reflect the Department's support for the development of fully integrated active transportation networks. The establishment of well-connected walking and bicycling networks is an important component for livable communities, and their design should be a part of Federal-aid project developments. Walking and bicycling foster safer, more livable, family-friendly communities; promote physical activity and health; and reduce vehicle emissions and fuel use. Legislation and regulations exist that require inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian policies and projects into transportation plans and project development. Accordingly, transportation agencies should plan, fund, and implement improvements to their walking and bicycling networks, including linkages to transit. In addition, DOT encourages transportation agencies to go beyond the minimum requirements, and proactively provide convenient, safe, and context-sensitive facilities that foster increased use by bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities, and utilize universal design characteristics when appropriate. Transportation programs and facilities should accommodate people of all ages and abilities, including people too young to drive, people who cannot drive, and people who choose not to drive.

Policy Statement

The DOT policy is to incorporate safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities into transportation projects. Every transportation agency, including DOT, has the responsibility to improve conditions and opportunities for walking and bicycling and to integrate walking and bicycling into their transportation systems. Because of the numerous individual and community benefits that walking and bicycling provide — including health, safety, environmental, transportation, and quality of life — transportation agencies are encouraged to go beyond minimum standards to provide safe and convenient facilities for these modes.

Authority

This policy is based on various sections in the United States Code (U.S.C.) and the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) in Title 23—Highways, Title 49—Transportation, and Title 42—The Public Health and Welfare. These sections, provided in the Appendix, describe how bicyclists and pedestrians of all abilities should be involved throughout the planning process, should not be adversely affected by other transportation projects, and should be able to track annual obligations and expenditures on nonmotorized transportation facilities.

Recommended Actions

The DOT encourages States, local governments, professional associations, community organizations, public transportation agencies, and other government agencies, to adopt similar policy statements on bicycle and pedestrian accommodation as an indication of their commitment to accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians as an integral element of the transportation system. In support of this commitment, transportation agencies and local communities should go beyond minimum design standards and requirements to create safe, attractive, sustainable, accessible, and convenient bicycling and walking networks. Such actions should include:

- Considering walking and bicycling as equals with other transportation modes: The primary goal of a transportation system is to safely and efficiently move people and goods. Walking and bicycling are efficient transportation modes for most short trips and, where convenient intermodal systems exist, these nonmotorized trips can easily be linked with transit to significantly increase trip distance. Because of the benefits they provide, transportation agencies should give the same priority to walking and bicycling as is given to other transportation modes. Walking and bicycling should not be an afterthought in roadway design.
- Ensuring that there are transportation choices for people of all ages and abilities, especially children: Pedestrian and bicycle facilities should meet accessibility requirements and provide safe, convenient, and interconnected transportation networks. For example, children should have safe and convenient options for walking or bicycling to school and parks. People who cannot or prefer not to drive should have safe and efficient transportation choices.
- Going beyond minimum design standards: Transportation agencies are encouraged, when possible, to avoid designing walking and bicycling facilities to the minimum standards. For example, shared-use paths that have been designed to minimum width requirements will need retrofits as more people use them. It is more effective to plan for increased usage than to retrofit an older facility. Planning projects for the long-term should anticipate likely future demand for bicycling and walking facilities and not preclude the provision of future improvements.
- Integrating bicycle and pedestrian accommodation on new, rehabilitated, and limited-access bridges: DOT encourages bicycle and pedestrian accommodation on bridge projects including facilities on limited-access bridges with connections to streets or paths.
- Collecting data on walking and biking trips: The best way to improve transportation networks for any mode is to collect and analyze trip data to optimize investments. Walking and bicycling trip data for many communities are lacking. This data gap can be overcome by establishing routine collection of nonmotorized trip information. Communities that routinely collect walking and bicycling data are able to track trends and prioritize investments to ensure the success of new facilities. These data are also valuable in linking walking and bicycling with transit.
- Setting mode share targets for walking and bicycling and tracking them over time: A byproduct of improved data collection is that communities can establish targets for increasing the percentage of trips made by walking and bicycling.
- Removing snow from sidewalks and shared-use paths: Current maintenance provisions require pedestrian facilities built with Federal funds to be maintained in the same manner as other roadway assets. State Agencies have generally established levels of service on various routes especially as related to snow and ice events.
- Improving nonmotorized facilities during maintenance projects: Many transportation agencies spend most of their transportation funding on maintenance rather than on constructing new facilities. Transportation agencies should find ways to make facility improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists during resurfacing and other maintenance projects.

Conclusion

Increased commitment to and investment in bicycle facilities and walking networks can help meet goals for cleaner, healthier air; less congested roadways; and more livable, safe, cost-efficient communities. Walking and bicycling provide low-cost mobility options that place fewer demands on local roads and highways. DOT recognizes that safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities may look different depending on the context — appropriate facilities in a rural community may be different from a dense, urban area. However, regardless of regional, climate, and population density differences, it is important that pedestrian and bicycle facilities be integrated into transportation systems. While DOT leads the effort to provide safe and convenient accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists, success will ultimately depend on transportation agencies across the country embracing and implementing this policy.

Ray LaHood, United States Secretary of Transportation

APPENDIX

Key Statutes and Regulations Regarding Walking and Bicycling

Planning Requirements

The State and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) planning regulations describe how walking and bicycling are to be accommodated throughout the planning process (e.g., see 23 CFR 450.200, 23 CFR 450.300, 23 U.S.C. 134(h), and 135(d)). Nonmotorists must be allowed to participate in the planning process and transportation agencies are required to integrate walking and bicycling facilities and programs in their transportation plans to ensure the operability of an intermodal transportation system. Key sections from the U.S.C. and CFR include, with italics added for emphasis:

- The scope of the metropolitan planning process "will address the following factors...(2) Increase the safety for motorized and *non-motorized users*; (3) Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and *non-motorized users*; (4) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life..." 23 CFR 450.306(a). See 23 CFR 450.206 for similar State requirements.
- Metropolitan transportation plans "...shall, at a minimum, include...existing and proposed transportation facilities (including major roadways, transit, multimodal and intermodal facilities, *pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities*, and intermodal connectors that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system..." 23 CFR 450.322(f). See 23 CFR 450.216(g) for similar State requirements.
- The plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs) of all metropolitan areas "shall provide for the development and integrated management and operation of transportation systems and facilities (including *accessible pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities*)." 23 U.S.C. 134(c)(2) and 49 U.S.C. 5303(c)(2). 23 CFR 450.324(c) states that the TIP "shall include ...trails projects, pedestrian walkways; and bicycle facilities..."
- 23 CFR 450.316(a) states that "The MPOs shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing...representatives of users of *pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities*, and *representatives of the disabled*, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan planning process." 23 CFR 450.210(a) contains similar language for States. See also 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(5), 135(f)(3), 49 U.S.C. 5303(i)(5), and 5304(f)(3) for additional information about participation by interested parties.

Prohibition of Route Severance

The Secretary has the authority to withhold approval for projects that would negatively impact pedestrians and bicyclists under certain circumstances. Key references in the CFR and U.S.C. include:

- "The Secretary shall not approve any project or take any regulatory action under this title that will result in the severance of an existing major route or have significant adverse impact on the safety for nonmotorized transportation traffic and light motorcycles, unless such project or regulatory action provides for a reasonable alternate route or such a route exists." 23 U.S.C. 109(m).
- "In any case where a highway bridge deck being replaced or rehabilitated with Federal financial participation is located on a highway on which bicycles are permitted to operate at each end of such bridge, and the Secretary determines that the safe accommodation of bicycles can be provided at reasonable cost as part of such replacement or rehabilitation, then such bridge shall be so replaced or rehabilitated as to provide such safe accommodations." 23 U.S.C. 217(e). Although this statutory requirement only mentions bicycles, DOT encourages States and local governments to apply this same policy to pedestrian facilities as well.
- 23 CFR 652 provides "procedures relating to the provision of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations on Federal-aid projects, and Federal participation in the cost of these accommodations and projects."

Project Documentation

- "In metropolitan planning areas, on an annual basis, no later than 90 calendar days following the end of the program year, the State, public transportation operator(s), and the MPO shall cooperatively develop a listing of projects (including investments in *pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities*) for which funds under 23 U.S.C. or 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 were obligated in the preceding program year." 23 CFR 332(a).

Accessibility for All Pedestrians

- Public rights-of-way and facilities are required to be accessible to persons with disabilities through the following statutes: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) (29 U.S.C. §794) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) (42 U.S.C. §§ 12131-12164).
- The DOT Section 504 regulation requires the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to monitor the compliance of the self-evaluation and transition plans of Federal-aid recipients (49 CFR §27.11). The FHWA Division offices review pedestrian access compliance with the ADA and Section 504 as part of their routine oversight activities as defined in their stewardship plans.
- FHWA posted its [Clarification of FHWA's Oversight Role in Accessibility](#) to explain how to accommodate accessibility in policy, planning, and projects.