

Section 1: PLAN OVERVIEW

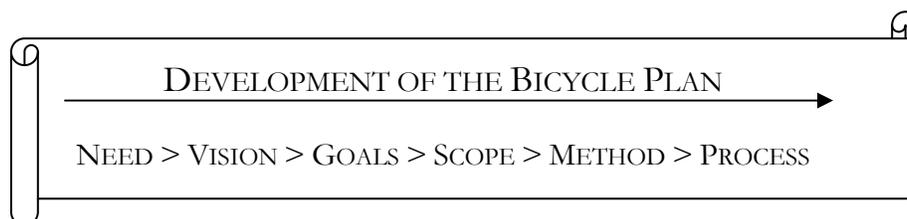
1.1 Realizing the Vision

NEED

The City of Kings Mountain is a compact historic community with a clearly discernable downtown business area, nearby schools, civic buildings, and public parks, all fitting together to create a small town charm highly valued by its citizens. But despite its obvious positive characteristics, the City is faced with growing challenges to bicycling:

- Formidable physical barriers such as highways, railroad lines, and busy internal streets, along much of the City’s length, present real challenges for bicyclists. Significant barriers include: The Norfolk-Southern Railroad line, I-85, US 74 (bypass), Battleground, York Road, and Kings Street (US 74 Business).
- Traffic volumes and speeds: Kings Street (most direct path), manufacturing areas, schools during commuting hours
- Narrow non-standard (old) road widths
- Conflicts w/ on-street parking: Piedmont, Gaston, Gold, Mountain. Angled parking favored by merchants. Parking issue downtown.
- Lack of existing bicycle facilities
- Aesthetics: RR overpasses. Beautify w/ landscaping, but the RR doesn’t want that.
- Blind corners and busy streets
- Insufficient street lighting

Each of these conditions requires specific actions that will produce tangible results. Such actions are most effective when they flow from a broad, cohesive strategy that the community supports and can realistically implement. Rather than simply reacting to the problems in a piecemeal manner as they occur, this comprehensive plan for bicycle transportation and recreation improvements provides a systematic approach to the City for taking on these challenges and others that threaten its bicycle environment, and to do so with a coordinated effort.



VISION

Throughout its formation, the Kings Mountain Bicycle Plan has been guided by the Vision for the community expressed by the Steering Committee. Taken from discussion points during the Committee's first meeting, the vision for Kings Mountain can be summed up as:

A socially connected, and economically thriving community with small town integrity; where everyone can safely and conveniently travel about, and enjoy a healthy lifestyle of exercise and recreation amidst the scenic beauty of the City and its natural surroundings

In order to attain this Vision, an ongoing coordinated effort must be undertaken to preserve the elements of the vision that exist, and guide the community's growth in a direction that will further achieve and maintain the Vision. The charter for this effort is the Kings Mountain Bicycle Plan.

GOALS

As the Plan is embraced and utilized in the ways described in its Purpose Statement, the City's Vision for a bicycle-friendly environment can be realized. This process will occur both through solving immediate concerns and achieving the City's expressed long-term goals:

- Provide for a safe bicycling experience through improvements that target strategic but unsafe sections of roadway and construction of safe off-road bicycle facilities.
- Provide bicycle connections to popular places like schools, businesses, downtown, and neighborhoods, and with that reinforce the connectedness and integrity of the community.
- Provide safe ways across gaps and around barriers (e.g. railroad and highways)
- Provide both on-road and off-road bicycle facilities to serve all segments of the population, with opportunities for commuting, recreation, healthy exercise, scenic enjoyment, and relief from automobile traffic.
- Create opportunities for economic development and significant community events.
- Minimize the burden on city services and resources, working within the constraints of existing physical conditions, parking, and right-of-way, and making the best use of available funding opportunities.

PURPOSE

This Comprehensive Bicycle Plan is intended to serve the City as:

- A compelling tool to promote the City's bicycle vision
- An effective source for the education of decision makers and the general public about the value and methods of making Kings Mountain a bicycle-friendly community
- A clear blueprint for the revision of City policies and ordinances that address development in order that all will support the same unified goals
- A comprehensive guide to the implementation and improvement of bicycle routes and amenities
- A firm basis for seeking financial assistance in the form of grants and other support from various outside sources in furthering the Plan's implementation

SCOPE

The area addressed in this bicycle plan includes the incorporated area of Kings Mountain City, and its Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction.

In order to meet these goals for this area, the Bicycle Plan examines a broad range of bicycle-related issues and recommends actions that address them in a comprehensive manner, including:

1. Policy and ordinance revision
2. Participation programs and initiatives
3. Comprehensive system planning
4. Facility standards and guidelines
5. Project identification and prioritization
6. Project specific planning and development process
7. Cost estimation
8. Funding and local budget recommendations
9. Project implementation and construction
10. Maintenance
11. Project evaluation process

METHOD

This Plan was developed using the methodology below, approved by the North Carolina Department of Transportation Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation.

- Task 1:** Gather relevant documents relating to bicycle concerns in the City.
- Task 2:** Determine the project scope, schedule, points of contact with municipal staff; identify stakeholder groups, potential Steering Committee members, target meeting dates and planning budget
- Task 3:** Conduct a physical survey of the City and gather additional input on bicycle conditions from the community. Road data includes posted speeds, number of lanes, paving widths, on-street parking and existing bicycle facilities.
- Task 4:** Create composite maps of existing conditions showing current facilities and traffic conditions.
- Task 5:** City Council appoints the project Steering Committee to guide, provide additional stakeholder input, and review the development of the Plan.
- Task 6:** Conduct Stakeholder Interviews on bicycle needs and preferences.
- Task 7:** Conduct an interactive public meeting to review initial Stakeholder input with the general public, obtain feedback, and gather additional input from the public on bicycle and mobility issues and concerns.
- Task 8:** Review the public meeting results with the Steering Committee and solicit input on project prioritization.
- Task 9:** Facilitate a second public meeting to review preliminary Bicycle Plan, addressing how input received through previous public processes has been incorporated into the draft Plan, and solicit input on project prioritization.
- Task 10:** Prepare the Draft Plan using input from the Stakeholders and citizen comments.
- Task 11:** Submit the draft plan for preliminary review and comment.
- Task 12:** Revise the Plan based on input received and meet with the Steering Committee to finalize approval of the Plan.
- Task 13:** Submit the Plan to the Planning Board and City Council for review. Additionally, submit the Plan to the Lake Norman RPO for endorsement.
- Task 14:** Upon adoption of Plan, furnish the City and NCDOT with the Plan with its associated maps.

PROCESS

In 2009, the City of Kings Mountain was awarded a \$37,500 matching Bicycle Planning Grant by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Division of Bicycle and Bicycle Transportation (DPBT) for the creation of a comprehensive bicycle plan. The City then selected Centralina Council of Governments to develop the plan. Working with Steve Killian, Director of Planning & Economic Development, and Marcie Campbell, City Planner, Centralina guided the City through a thorough, public-input driven planning process, involving a steering committee to oversee the elements of the plan. The steering committee members represented a variety of local interests including:

- Police department
- Business community
- Transportation
- Health and medical fields
- Local government
- Schools
- Resident bicycle enthusiasts
- Public Library



1.2 Benefits of Bicycling

“The bicycle is the most efficient machine ever created: Converting calories into gas, a bicycle gets the equivalent of three thousand miles per gallon.”

~ Bill Strickland, *The Quotable Cyclist*

"Bicycling is a big part of the future. It has to be. There's something wrong with a society that drives a car to work out in a gym."

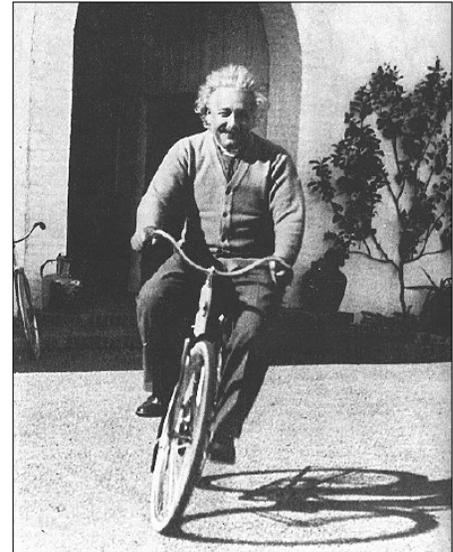
~ Bill Nye, *the Science Guy*

“Chasing records doesn't keep me on my bike. Happiness does.”

~ Lance Armstrong after his third Tour de France victory

“I thought of that while riding my bicycle.”

~ Albert Einstein on the theory of relativity



Communities that recognize the many advantages of bicycling for their citizens and visitors are intentional about providing the facilities that help make bicycling safe, practical and enjoyable. Such improvements would help make the Kings Mountain community healthier, more vibrant and a more attractive place to live, visit, work and own a business. Consider some of the direct benefits of the bicycle lifestyle in these various categories:

1. Local Economy

Investments in a community through bicycle-oriented improvements can yield economic results, and offer valuable incentives to prospective residents and businesses. Communities that offer bicycle-friendly features like mixed-use zoning, on road and off-road bicycle facilities, and associated traffic calming measures, tend to increase in property values and private investment along previously automobile-dominated roads. Areas with transportation choices such as biking and mass-transit can be more economically productive and competitive, while those that are limited to the automobile tend to have reduced regional economic development. Multiple nationwide studies indicate parks, greenways, and trails increase the resale value of nearby properties by 5 to 20 percent. (Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation web site, 2006)

The North Carolina Department of Transportation Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation (DBPT) commissioned a study in 2003 to assess the value of their investment in bicycle facilities. The Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) at North Carolina State University conducted the study in the northern Outer Banks region because of its existing high levels of bicycling activity and presence of an extensive system of special bicycle facilities. Researchers surveyed bicyclists riding on the bicycle facilities — paths and wide paved shoulders — and also obtained data from self-administered surveys of tourists at three visitors' centers in the region.



Over the ten years prior to the study, an estimated \$6.7 million of public funds was spent to construct off-road paths and add wide paved shoulders to roads in the region, from Corolla south to Nags Head and west to Manteo.

The study concluded:

- Bicycling activity in the northern Outer Banks provides substantial economic benefits to the area — an estimated \$60 million annually.
- The bicycle facilities in the area are an important factor for many tourists in deciding to visit the region.
- Three-fourths of study respondents indicated that more bicycle facilities should be built, and nine out of 10 surveyed believe state and federal tax dollars should be used to do it.

The complete study is available at: <http://www.ncdot.gov/bikeped/researchreports/>

2. Public Health

Fitness experts agree that regular daily activity is the key to good health. According to the Center for Disease Control, 50% of adults in the United States fail to get the recommended amount of physical activity for good health. As many as 300,000 premature deaths occur each year in this country because of physical inactivity. The League of American Bicyclists reports that just three hours of bicycling per week can reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke by 50%. As bicycling becomes a more significant part of daily life in Kings Mountain, this will yield healthier lifestyles and ultimately impact community health care costs in a positive manner.

3. Safety

Drivers familiar with a community learn which streets are generally more populated with bicycle traffic. The more bicycles likely to be encountered, the more cautious most drivers are apt to be. In this way, bicycle activity is self-protective. The more bicycles using a street, the safer that street becomes for bicycles.

4. Youth Friendly

In one generation, the percentage of U.S. children who walk or bike to school has dropped by 70%, while childhood obesity has tripled (Centers for Disease Control). When communities are bicycle-friendly, young people are free to rely less on parents to drive them to school and other activities. As young people become accustomed to biking, they are also less likely to depend on automobiles for short trips as they grow older. With a more complete system of on-road bicycle facilities, multi-use trails, and other bicycle amenities helping to connect a mix of significant destinations within close proximity of each other, bicycling becomes a safer and more reasonable option, particularly to those who need it most.





5. Friendly to Underprivileged Populations

Another group for whom bicycle friendliness means independence are those who cannot afford their own personal automobile. According to the 2001 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), one in 12 U.S. households does not own an automobile. For them, mobility is severely limited in communities that are designed around the car. Walkable communities maximize the independence and mobility in ways that auto-dependent communities cannot.

6. Improved Environment

A bicycle-friendly environment will contribute positively to air quality by reducing unneeded vehicular trips. During the first few minutes of vehicle operation, emission rates are at their highest. Reductions in the number of short vehicle trips can therefore provide relatively large pollution emission reductions. The World Watch Institute has found that a four-mile commuting round trip by bicycle (instead of automobile) keeps about 15 pounds of pollutants out of the air.

7. Transportation

After walking, bicycling is the most affordable and efficient transportation system available. Half of all trips in urbanized area are three miles or less, easy distances for bicycling. And more than half of all Americans live less than five miles from where they work according to Bicycling magazine.



8. Recreation

Perhaps the most obvious benefit of bicycle-safe streets and trails is the recreational asset to the community. Bicyclists in the nation outnumber skiers, golfers and tennis players combined. Among home buyers, walking and biking trails are ranked as the most desired amenity, ahead of ball parks and outdoor pools (National Home Builder Survey, 2004).