

# Chapter 1. Introduction

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Imagine sipping coffee in Uptown Normal and walking comfortably along a wide sidewalk on College Avenue and up Towanda Avenue, past Sugar Creek Elementary School. Imagine walking along Fort Jesse Road toward eastern Normal and making your way across Veterans Parkway on a series of completed sidewalks and safe street crossings to reach Normal’s newer neighborhoods.

Now imagine riding your bicycle on the Constitution Trail, complete with safe and comfortable street crossings along the way. Imagine cruising along Locust Street, a bike-friendly street where autos and bikes travel at the same speed. The ride continues on Pine Street, where bike lanes designate space for bicyclists. Imagine connecting to the Historic Route 66 Bike Trail, a wide shared use path linking Normal with communities throughout McLean County.

Finally, imagine building a transportation system that reduces fuel consumption, enables freedom of mobility, encourages more physical activity, allows children to walk and bike to school, and makes it possible to create economic growth at the same time... this is the vision for Normal’s walking and bicycling system.

The foundation of a potentially tremendous bikeway/walkway network is already in place or in development. Uptown Normal and several neighborhoods already have well-connected streets with few sidewalk gaps, while many low-volume streets also act as good bicycling routes. The Constitution Trail, a 24-mile long trail following a former railroad corridor, provides the backbone of Normal’s shared use path system (see Figure 1). The Historic Route 66 – long symbolizing the freedom of transportation and opportunities of progress – winds through Normal. The “Mother Road” presents a spectacular opportunity to link Normal into a regional bicycle trail network and build a new symbol of commitment to providing transportation options. This Plan presents a tremendous opportunity to build upon current efforts to develop a Historic Route 66 Bikeway, with Normal having one of the first completed segments in Illinois and the U.S.

With bicycling and walking combining to account for over six percent of McLean County’s commute trips – about twice the national average – residents are clearly making use of the existing network.<sup>2</sup> With the foundation of a potentially fantastic system in place, the Town wants to take bicycling and walking to the next level. The Normal Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan presents the vision of a fully-developed bicycle and pedestrian system



**Figure 1. The Constitution Trail is the backbone of an excellent shared use path network in Normal**

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<sup>2</sup> 2007 U.S. Census American Community Survey.

throughout the Town, serving residents, commuters, children and visitors alike. A complete bikeway and walkway network will enhance overall connections within the community and promote the overall health of area residents by making walking and bicycling safe, comfortable and attractive modes of travel.

## Setting

Whether it be a leisurely bike ride along the Constitution Trail or a short walk to school, Normal residents and visitors greatly value the area's walking and bicycling opportunities. Uptown Normal offers an attractive walking environment, while the *Main Street Plan* (2007) will improve non-motorized conditions on one of the town's nearby north-south thoroughfares. Surrounding neighborhoods have well-connected streets, many of which serve as excellent bicycling routes due to low traffic speeds and volumes. Sidewalk connectivity is generally good throughout the Town, and large planting strips provide a buffer from traffic, increasing the attractiveness of walkways.

Despite these assets, Normal residents and leaders desire to make their community even more attractive for walkers and bicyclists. In some areas, bicycle and pedestrian system upgrades are needed. These include intersection improvements, sidewalk completion, *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) compliance, completing bikeway network gaps, and establishing new connections.

## Purpose of the Normal Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan provides an updated inventory and assessment of Normal's walkway and bikeway network and is an update of the bicycle-pedestrian component of the 1994 *Bloomington-Normal Urbanized Area Long Range Transportation Plan*. This Plan lays out comprehensive strategies for system-wide improvements and specifies exactly what needs to be done to achieve the Town's goal of becoming a better walking and bicycling community. These strategies will help Normal leverage the necessary funding and other resources needed to achieve this goal.

## Public Involvement in the Plan

Town staff, stakeholder groups, and – most of all – Normal residents helped guide this Plan. Community workshops were held throughout the project's duration, enabling residents and other interested individuals to express concerns and ideas for improvements. The planning process also included a Steering Committee, established to identify bicycle/pedestrian issues from the standpoint of various interest groups and organizations.

## Contents of the Plan

The Normal Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction, provides an overview of this Plan and its purpose.
- Chapter 2: Existing Conditions, describes Normal's existing walkway and bikeway network and summarizes strengths and weaknesses of the system.
- Chapter 3: User Needs Assessment, uses an analytical model to estimate current bicycling and walking demand and to predict future demand and evaluates safety data to identify locations for facility and programmatic improvements.
- Chapter 4: Recommended Walkway and Bikeway Network, depicts the recommended system of on- and off-street walkways and bikeways, along with design guidelines from local, state and national best practices for various bicycle and pedestrian facility types.
- Chapter 5: Recommended Pedestrian and Bicycle Programs, describes education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation measures the Town of Normal and/or other local agencies should implement to promote walking and bicycling, to increase bicyclist and pedestrian safety, and to increase the awareness of walking and bicycling as viable travel modes.
- Chapter 6: Project Prioritization, presents evaluation criteria for facilities and programs and defines the methodology for developing a phased implementation approach, detailing several top-priority projects.
- Chapter 7: Implementation Plan, provides cost opinions for the recommended pedestrian and bicycle projects and programs, and identifies potential funding strategies and supporting policies.
- Appendices at the end of this Plan include a more detailed discussion of existing conditions, a list of previously-proposed bicycle and pedestrian projects, and a summary of relevant background documents and data that informed the prioritization process. Additional appendices include graphics depicting proposed bike lane retrofit projects, a detailed project evaluation matrix, cost opinions, and a matrix of potential grant funding sources for individual improvement projects.

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