

Bulletin #4

“Exercise Your Right to Bike or Walk!!”

How can we enhance the bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Morris County?

July 2007

Morris County Division of Transportation



The Morris County Division of Transportation, in coordination with the Morris County Planning Board, is developing the Circulation Element of the Morris County Master Plan. A series of ten transportation bulletins, which will be released individually, are currently in development to reflect major countywide and regional transportation issues that affect our daily lives. In addition to the bulletins, a technical document is being developed. This document will reflect detailed county projects, demographics, issues, and projections. It is anticipated that these broad based bulletins, which will have a large distribution, will create an exchange of ideas, therefore becoming an important part of the plan's development.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

Bulletin #1: It's Not Cool to Drive to School – An Examination of School-Related Congestion (June 2006)

Bulletin #2: Putting the Brakes on Congestion! – Will it only get worse? (February 2007)

Bulletin #3: Not Another Accident! – Improving roadway safety and enhancing emergency response. (March 2007)

Bulletin #4 advocates that the option to bike or walk in Morris County needs to be available. During the county's municipal outreach to elected officials, planners, engineers, and residents, bicycle and pedestrian facility enhancement was identified as important for improving recreation and commuting options in their communities. Furthermore, on September 18, 2006, NJ Governor Jon S. Corzine announced a five year, \$74 million pedestrian safety initiative to reduce the number of pedestrian-involved accidents. The discussion in this bulletin focuses on the benefits of walking and bicycling, and presents approaches for creating and improving opportunities for these activities that promote good health, a cleaner environment, and less dependency on automobiles.

This bulletin, as well as the previous bulletins mentioned above, can also be found on the Morris County Division of Transportation's (MCDOT) website at www.mcdot.org. Questions may be directed to Deena Cybulski of the MCDOT at mcdot@co.morris.nj.us or by using the contact information provided below.

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Exercise Your Right to Bike or Walk!

How can we enhance the bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Morris County?



Bike and pedestrian facilities serve all types of functions. They provide opportunities for recreational use, safe routes to school, connectivity through neighborhoods, and alternative modes of transportation. Whether someone is too young to drive, doesn't own a car, or is unable to operate one, sidewalks and bike lanes help people to get where they need or want to go. Most importantly, bicycle and pedestrian facilities can be utilized by almost everyone and improve the quality of life for all.

Not only are bicycle and pedestrian facilities used for transportation, but they serve as recreational outlets as well. Morris County has an excellent system of federal, state, county, and municipal parks that combine bicycle and walking trails with other forms of recreation. Connecting separate parklands with bikeways and sidewalks would further enhance the trail network and improve access to recreational areas.

Cycling and walking also promote a healthy lifestyle. Over 136 million Americans, ages 20 or above, are overweight and 22% are defined as obese (NJ Department of Health and Senior Services, Health Data Fact Sheet, 2006). Health officials strongly advocate incorporating bicycling or walking into a daily routine as a way to combat this growing epidemic (American Heart Association, 2003). These activities also improve blood pressure and

reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases and type-two diabetes. A leisurely bike ride will burn approximately 480 calories per hour, and a slow walk at two miles per hour will burn around 250 calories per hour. By comparison, driving will burn only 84 calories per hour. Whether an individual incorporates these activities into their daily commute or exercise routine, it is imperative to have the infrastructure in place so the option is available.

Providing transportation options can also help a person save money and improve the environment. The average cost of operating a car is \$5,170 a year (Automobile Association of America); the average cost of owning a bicycle is \$120 annually (League of American Bicyclists); and, of course, walking is free. Bicycling and walking also reduce gasoline consumption and do not release pollutants into the air. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), 11.7 billion gallons of fuel were saved due to bicycling or walking in 2000 (FHWA: Publication No.: PD 93-015).

For some, comprehensive and safe bike and pedestrian facilities are a necessity. School age children, whose safety is a primary concern, depend on bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Unable to drive, children under the age of 17 are among the most predominant users of sidewalks and bicycles. They depend on them to get to school, to their friends, and to parks. Sidewalks and bike paths provide the freedom to go places without needing a parent or guardian to drive them. Morris County and municipalities like Wharton have promoted this behavior through programs like "Safe Routes to School." "Safe Routes to School" programs encourage walking and biking in groups, which helps ease parents' concerns over their children's safety.

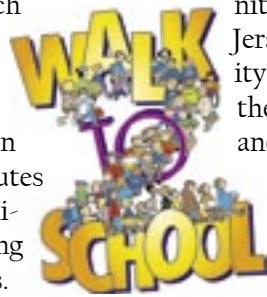
In addition to the younger population, bike and pedestrian facilities also improve the quality of life for Morris County's aging population. As of 2000, 11.5% of Morris County was age 65 or older. Over the next 25 years, the



The average cost of operating a car is \$5,170 a year (AAA), the average cost of owning a bicycle is \$120 per year (League of American Bicyclists).

population 65 and older is expected to grow by 80% nationwide. A report by the Surface Transportation Policy Project in 2004 revealed that one in five Americans over age 65 do not drive and more than half of those do not leave their home because of the lack of transportation options. Senior mobility is limited in rural communities and sprawling suburbs, a common characteristic in many Morris County municipalities. Whether young, old, or in between, bicycle and pedestrian facilities provide varying benefits and choices for everyone in a safe environment.

Federal and state programs have been introduced to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian facilities into neighborhood planning. As previously mentioned, "Safe Routes to School" programs promote these elements by encouraging children to bike or walk to school, where feasible, rather than travel by car or bus. The "Safe Routes to School" program identifies needs and targets improvements such as sidewalk repair, bicycle rack installations at schools, driver and pedestrian education on safety, and enforcement of traffic laws. Wharton has developed a successful "Safe Routes to School" plan and other municipalities in Morris County are also seeking funding to start their own programs.



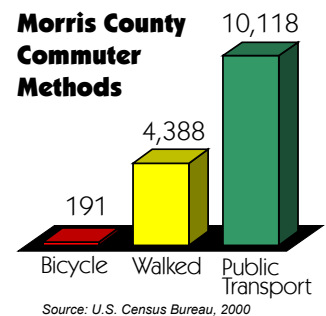
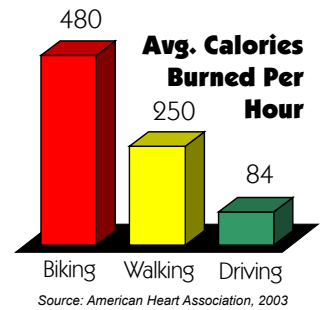
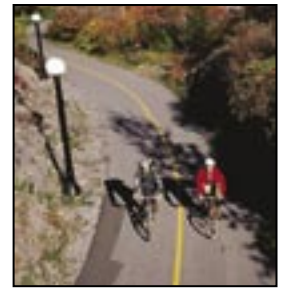
In addition to "Safe Routes," New Jersey has created a five year, \$74 million initiative to improve pedestrian safety through engineering, education, and enforcement that encourage drivers to safely share the road. Governor Jon S. Corzine announced this program on September 18, 2006 in response to the number of pedestrian-related accidents in the state. Besides the governor's involvement in bicycle and pedestrian matters, New Jersey Department of Transportation and NJ TRANSIT have worked together to create a Smart-Growth partnership called the Transit Village Initiative. The initiative promotes the mixed-use redevelopment of communities around transit facilities encouraging growth in areas where infrastructure and public transit already exist, which leads to walking to transit and other services rather than driving. Furthermore, a concept called Complete Streets has been promoted by bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups in New Jersey. Complete Streets encourages engineers, developers, and planners to design

streets that consider pedestrian, bicyclist, and driver mobility.

Municipalities in Morris County are already taking steps to provide for better bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Morristown has created a Bike Plan Committee that is exploring the development of a bicycle and pedestrian plan for Morristown. Randolph is planning to construct a 12.5 mile bike path that will link all public schools and parks with County College of Morris and Patriot's Path. The Borough of Madison has already adopted a plan that connects its downtown and the NJ TRANSIT train station to local parks and schools through bike lanes and shared roadways. The Town of Dover published a Transit Oriented Development Plan, which incorporates bicycle and pedestrian elements into its streetscapes to make the downtown friendlier for multiple transportation options. Dover also hosted a Walkable Community Workshop, sponsored by the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, designed to identify ways to improve the opportunity and safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Municipalities with developed sidewalk networks, compact land uses, and a mix of housing and jobs have been able to provide transportation options. Morristown, Madison, and Dover already experience 10% of commuters walking or bicycling to work (US Census Bureau, 2000). But these benefits are not limited to compact neighborhoods. Rural communities, such as Chester and Washington Township are seeking to improve their bicycle and pedestrian facilities as well. Conventional wisdom among planners suggests that individuals are not willing to walk more than a quarter of a mile to their destination. A study conducted at San Jose State University took a closer look at pedestrian behavior and found that people walk, on average, 0.58 miles to their transit location (A Spatial Analysis of Pedestrian Preference, 2006). Whether for commuting or recreation, additional bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the county will raise the quality of life for residents of all age groups.

The following are proposals to continue to improve bike and pedestrian facilities in Morris County:





Proposals



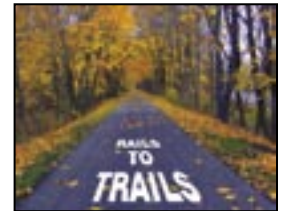
1 ♦ Expansion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities

Improve and expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities to increase options for walking and bicycling and increase safety and access to public transit.

COUNTY ACTIONS

The Morris County Division of Transportation (MCDOT) should conduct an inventory of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in all 39 Morris County municipalities and compile the information into a database in order to:

- ▶ Analyze existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities to prioritize corridors in need of improvement or maintenance and identify important missing links in the bike/ped network. Use this analysis to develop the basis for state funding requests.
- ▶ Develop an information tool located on the MCDOT website that allows users to obtain information regarding Morris County bike facilities and pedestrian pathways.
- ▶ Update the Morris County Bicycle and Pedestrian User Guide to include newly mapped and created bicycle and pedestrian paths. Release this as a 3rd edition of the User Guide and distribute to the public.
- ▶ Involve the Morris County Park Commission to contribute necessary components of the bicycle and pedestrian facility inventory.



MCDOT and the Division of Engineering should implement the recommendations made during the inventory analysis.

- ▶ Alert drivers by installing signage, such as “Share the Road,” and “Yield to Pedestrians in Crosswalk.”
- ▶ Add bicycle and pedestrian related markings to roads, such as sharrows, crosswalks, and bike lanes that alert all roadway users of designated bicycle routes and pedestrian crossings.
- ▶ Install infrastructure on roadways that safeguards bicyclists and pedestrians. Such infrastructure includes sidewalks, curb extensions, curb cuts, pedestrian count-down traffic signals, bike racks, benches, and park trails.
- ▶ Widen and repair sidewalks for other modes of transportation such as wheelchairs and motorized scooters.
- ▶ Encourage developers during site plan review to add bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure elements to their projects where appropriate.



GENERAL ACTIONS

- ▶ Evaluate streets for the viability of installing or extending bike lanes in order to safely accommodate cyclists on roads.
- ▶ Municipalities should include, at a minimum, bicycle and pedestrian designs and requirements into zoning and future development plans in accordance with the state’s Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS).
- ▶ Sidewalks and bike lanes should be maintained through snow and debris removal, proper drainage, and street lighting to ensure the safety and convenience of users.
- ▶ Encourage business site plans to include bicycle storage, locker, and shower facilities.

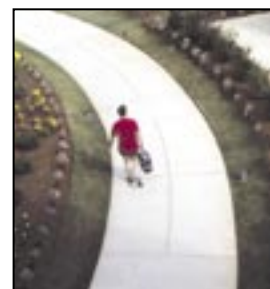


2 Policy and funding of bicycle and pedestrian facilities

Examine policy and funding decisions that impact creation and maintenance of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

COUNTY ACTIONS

- ▶ Explore the possibility of using a portion of the Morris County Preservation Trust Fund for bicycle and pedestrian projects. This strategy has been employed by Middlesex County.
- ▶ Organize a bicycle and pedestrian public forum to promote the benefits of multi-modal transportation polices and facilities. Target audiences would include local touring and hiking clubs, bicycle shops, TransOptions, private sector employers, advocacy groups, citizens, and local government officials.
- ▶ Encourage municipalities to adopt a circulation plan, and address bicycle and pedestrian issues in coordination with the broader plan.
- ▶ Assist municipalities to obtain state funding for sidewalk improvements.
- ▶ Adopt a “Complete Streets” policy that requires the inclusion of all users (pedestrians, cyclists, and other multi-modal users) in new development and redevelopment designs and encourage municipalities to adopt similar policies.



GENERAL ACTIONS

- ▶ Adopt and enforce laws requiring residents to clear ice and snow from sidewalks in front of their homes or businesses within 24 hours of a snowfall.
- ▶ Create recreation challenges to encourage residents to take advantage of the county’s paved and natural trails. For instance, Montgomery County, Maryland developed such a program for people to walk one hundred miles in one hundred days over the summer of 2006.



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