

CHAPTER 6. Action for Active Transportation

6.1 ADOPT, APPROVE AND INTEGRATE

ACTIVEALLEGHENY lays the groundwork for a complete multi-modal transportation network with successful active transportation connectivity for Allegheny County. Implementation of this plan will be by PennDOT, Allegheny County, and local municipalities. Local municipal plans should work toward consistency and this enhancement to the ALLEGHENYPLACES transportation element, pending adoption of the updates. PennDOT, Allegheny County, and local municipal support for ACTIVEALLEGHENY will enable effective implementation of this active transportation vision. Municipalities can work to plan and adopt specific active improvements consistent with the standards and guidelines in this plan. The toolboxes, model ordinance and specifications are resources for use in customizing local municipal plans. For specific projects identified in the plan, a focused team effort by all levels of government involved in each suggested improvement can lead to construction and use of the desired facilities. For regional active transportation connectivity, Allegheny County will coordinate with adjacent counties to achieve regional integration of active transportation, creating active transportation byways that connect from county-to-county.

County residents have a role to encourage leaders to implement improvements identified in the plan, and to assist in achieving active transportation facilities and usage an important component for a healthier life experience with mode choices for Allegheny County. PennDOT is a critical partner in provision of support for this vision through assistance and commitment to identifying and committing funds to construct active transportation improvements.

6.2 IMPLEMENTING AGENCY

Active transportation projects can be implemented by a variety of entities; the party implementing the improvement will help determine the funding source that can be used. The entities are:

PennDOT

PennDOT must be involved in all bicycle and pedestrian improvements that occur within state roadway rights-of-way, even if they do not necessarily providing funding for these improvements. PennDOT typically does not fund the construction of “independent bikeway projects”, or projects that are intended to construct only a bicycle facility. However, it will process federal funding (and county and state matches) for such projects if requested by sponsoring organizations for projects on state roadways. If an “incidental bikeway projects” is developed as part of a larger project; for example, on a roadway improvement, a shoulder could be modified to bicycle compatible standards. The recently opened segment of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail between the 31st Street Bridge and Millvale Riverfront Park was developed as part of the Route 28 Improvement Project. Depending on the scale of improvement, incidental bikeway projects may be incorporated into normal PennDOT funding channels. The sponsoring agency should initiate discussion and advocacy in the early stages of a PennDOT project so that incidental bikeway projects are included in the project pipeline. But more importantly, PennDOT should take the initiative to consider all modes on projects.



Pedestrian in Friendship

According to PennDOT Design Manual (DM-2, Chapter 6: Pedestrian Facilities) it is PennDOT’s policy not to use state funds for sidewalk construction. However, there are several exceptions, such as to accommodate critical pedestrian

safety needs as part of a larger roadway project, or ADA compliance for alterations as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. PennDOT will process federal funding (with local matching funds) for the construction of sidewalks within state rights-of-way. Municipalities can donate right-of-way, engineering, or construction funding for sidewalks as part of their local match.

Although PennDOT typically does not fund construction of independent bicycle and pedestrian projects, it will fund planning studies for such facilities (see “Pennsylvania Community and Transportation Initiative” (PCTI) in Section 6-3 below; other state departments also provide funding for active transportation projects.

Municipalities

Local municipalities can adopt their own plans and policies for developing and funding active transportation projects on locally owned roadways. These projects are then added to their capital improvements program, which are funded from local tax revenues or from state gas tax revenues. In addition to projects specifically developed as active transportation efforts, municipal officials should review projects currently on the capital improvements program, and determine where facilities that encourage pedestrian and bicycle travel, and transit use, can be added at little expense. Municipalities will also often serve as the initiating agency for projects on state roadways; they may request the installation of facilities to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, and secure funding offered by federal, state and county agencies, even if PennDOT ultimately performs the work. Municipalities should utilize criteria developed for active transportation safety and demand to prioritize improvements.



*Need for bicycle racks
Photo: Kevin Smay*

Developers

Developers may be asked to construct pedestrian and bicycle facilities along both state and local municipal roadways as part of development projects. Applications for all land developments requiring access to state highways are reviewed by PennDOT and this provides the opportunity to request needed improvements. As part of PennDOT’s Smart Transportation initiative, a 2009 revision to PennDOT’s *Transportation Impact Studies Guidelines* requires developers to state how pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users will be accommodated in projects along state roadways. For example, if a state roadway is designated as a bike route by the municipality, PennDOT should request that the shoulder be developed to bicycle compatible standards.

Likewise, municipalities should have appropriate standards for pedestrian facilities in their subdivision and land development ordinances, and request developers to install such facilities along both local and state owned roadways as part of the normal land development review. Bicycle facilities are in a different category than pedestrian facilities; a sidewalk can have utility if installed as a segment only on the developer’s property, but a bicycle facility will normally be appropriate if needed as part of a larger planned facility. The local municipality should therefore request the developer to install the appropriate bike facility if the roadway is designated as such in a local municipal bicycle plan.



Accommodations at Airside Business Park, Moon Township

6.3 FUNDING SOURCES

Following is a discussion of funding sources available to assist in the planning, design and construction of active transportation improvements.

Federal Funding

Federal transportation funding is typically authorized in 6 year cycles. In 2005, Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) guaranteed \$244.1 billion for transportation funding. According to FHWA’s website, \$480 million of federal funding was spent on bicycle and pedestrian projects during the life of SAFETEA-LU (2005-2009). Due to federal budget issues and other priorities, the current Administration and Congress did not pass a new reauthorization bill in 2009 or 2010. Instead, SAFETEA-LU funding levels and programs have been extended year-to-year with continuing resolutions. After the 2010 mid-term elections, a new reauthorization bill will likely be considered in 2011. The Administration has stated that its priorities for this bill include promoting Livable Communities, transit, congestion reduction, and climate change. These priorities all offer opportunities for funding Active Transportation projects. State and local governments and Active Transportation proponents should lobby for these programs to be included in the reauthorization.

Federal funding programs for bicycle and pedestrian projects currently include:

- 1) **National Highway System (NHS)** funds if adjacent to a highway on the National Highway System.
- 2) **Surface Transportation Program (STP)** funds including Transportation Enhancement Activities and Hazard Elimination and Railway-Highway Crossing Programs.
- 3) **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)** funds.
- 4) **Recreational Trails Program** funds for trail projects.
- 5) **Federal Lands Highway Program** if used in conjunction with roadway improvements.
- 6) **National Scenic Byways Program** funds if adjacent to a National Scenic Byway.
- 7) **Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Grants** if used to improve employment access and increase opportunities.
- 8) **High Priority Projects and Designated Transportation Enhancement (TE) Activities.**
- 9) **Federal Transit Program** to improve access to transit facilities and provide non-motorized amenities.
- 10) **State and Community Highway Safety Grants** for research, development, demonstrations and training to improve highway safety (23 USC Section 403).
- 11) **Home Town Streets/Safe Routes to School** to improve access by bicycles and pedestrians to schools and to encourage the use of alternative modes.

State Funding

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) initiated the **Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative (PCTI)** in 2008 to promote the principles of Smart Transportation throughout the Commonwealth. PCTI funds planning projects up to \$300,000 and construction projects of up to \$1 million. The program is currently in its second round of funding with applications currently under consideration. In addition to the PCTI program, PennDOT uses federally allocated money throughout the Commonwealth for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Most commonly used sources of funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities come from Transportation Enhancement (TE) funding and the Home Town Streets/Safe Routes to School Program, both federally funded programs administered at the state level. Not all of these programs have funding or opportunities to apply for funding at all times.

In addition to PennDOT funding, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has several grant opportunities available to promote active transportation. Grant opportunities are part of the **Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2)** which is designed to assist communities in addressing their recreation and

conservation needs as well as supporting economically beneficial recreational tourism. The following grants are available and applicable for bicycle and pedestrian uses for development, construction, or education⁵:

- **Community Recreation and Conservation** – These grants fund municipalities and nonprofit organizations to plan for, acquire, develop and/or rehabilitate public park, recreation, open space, greenway, trail and conservation areas and facilities.
- **Pennsylvania Recreational Trails** – These grants help develop and maintain recreational trails and trail related facilities for motorized and non-motorized recreational trail use, and to purchase equipment for those purposes.
- **DCNR C2P2 Rails-to-Trails** – These grants help plan for, acquire, or develop rail-trail corridors.
- **Rivers Conservation** – These Grants help develop watershed/river-corridor conservation plans, assist with land acquisition and development projects recommended in areas with completed river conservation plans on the rivers conservation registry.
- **Technical Assistance** – Grants to develop/promote/conduct training/education programs; prepare and distribute technical assistance/education manuals/brochures/videos or otherwise provide for training and education of professionals and the general public on a local, county, regional or statewide issues concerning recreation, park, conservation, natural areas, open space, greenways, and trails.
- **Circuit Rider Projects** – These projects provide grant funds for counties, multi-municipal organizations, or COGs to hire a professional, full-time staff person. The circuit rider’s purpose is to initiate new programs and services for a county and/or municipalities that individually do not have the financial resources to hire a professional staff person.
- **Peer-to-Peer** – These projects help municipalities improve their park, recreation and conservation services through a collaborative process. Projects are accomplished through contracts with experienced park, recreation and conservation professionals from nearby communities working closely with local leaders.



Eliza Furnace Trail, City of Pittsburgh

Regional Funding

MPOs

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) are federally designated transportation planning organizations located in all urbanized areas in the U.S. MPOs are charged with programming all federal transportation funding expended in an urbanized area, as well as maintaining a short-term transportation plan (Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), 4-year horizon) and a long-term transportation and economic development plan (typically 20-year horizon). MPOs also program non-federally funded projects of regional significance. Each MPO’s TIP is then integrated into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP), a twelve-year program to provide a broad picture of transportation projects throughout the Commonwealth. Allegheny County is one of ten counties in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) region. Other SPC members are Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington and Westmoreland counties, as well as the City of Pittsburgh.

TMA

Transportation Management Associations (TMA) are non-profit organizations tasked with creating a better transportation environment for residents, businesses, and visitors. TMAs are comprised of members, often businesses, who support the TMA financially. TMAs in the study area include:

⁵ all information is taken from the DCNR C2P2 Grant Website at <https://www.grants.dcnr.state.pa.us/GrantPrograms.aspx>

A Comprehensive Commuter Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan for Allegheny County

- The Airport Corridor Transportation Association (ACTA) serves the business community located along the Parkway West from the western portal of the Fort Pitt Tunnel through Beaver County.
- The Oakland Transportation Management Association (OTMA) serves the Oakland area.
- The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership Transportation Management Association (PDP TMA) serves the Downtown Pittsburgh central business district.

TMAs offer transportation services (shuttles, shared-ride, etc), as well as advocate, educate, and offer technical assistance to individuals and member organizations. TMAs often provide funding for community transportation initiatives and are an excellent source of technical assistance to local municipalities for project implementation. TMA’s also advocate for funding from state and federal sources and provide valuable education programs to encourage active transportation use.

Private Funding

The Bicycles Belong Coalition is sponsored by member companies of the American bicycle industry. According to their website (www.bikesbelong.org), Bikes Belong has awarded 209 grants to municipalities and grassroots groups since 1999, for a total of nearly \$1.6 million in bicycle projects. Eligibility and funding guidelines are provided on their website under “Grants.”

Other local organizations provide support and funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Montour Trail Council, for example, builds, operates and maintains the Montour Trail.

Foundations are another source of private funding. There are many foundations in Allegheny County, and some have become active in transportation funding. **The Pittsburgh Foundation**, one of the largest community foundations in the United States, has provided funding for community transportation initiatives involving workforce accessibility, reverse commuting, and others. Their grant eligibility criteria include projects that “enhance access to entry-level jobs and needed services through integrated transit systems; expand strategic alliances to increase transit ridership; and promote development of healthy transportation alternatives (walking, biking, etc.)” Other foundations also provide active transportation funding. For example, the newly opened section of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail received funding from the **Laurel Foundation**, the **Richard King Mellon Foundation** and the **Heinz Foundation**.

6.4 SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS – ACTION PLAN

As noted previously, PennDOT, Allegheny County, and local municipalities should use this plan and its toolboxes and other resources as a guide in developing Active Transportation projects in their communities or as part of their transportation facilities. However, some major elements of the plan will require coordinated, multi-jurisdictional actions to move forward. These elements include:

Designated County Commuter Bicycle Routes and Recreational Route

These routes (N1-N4, W1-W4, E1-E4, S1-S4 and the Beltway Bicycle Route), will traverse a combination of state, county and municipally owned roads. Logically, Allegheny County could assume a lead role in the implementation of these routes. In this role, the County could identify and help to secure funding sources, provide engineering to determine actions and budgets needed to bring deficient route segments up to current bicycle suitability standards, prioritize the order of route implementation, establish route signing and marking standards, and identify the responsible agencies for implementing improvements (such as new trail construction, shoulder widening, signing, etc.).



Motorist and a Bicyclist

Pedestrian Corridor Improvements



Steps, Carnegie Mellon University

Similarly, the plan includes a number of pedestrian corridors identified for improvements. Although many of these corridors are within one municipality, it may be desirable for one agency, possibly the County, to serve as a “Champion” for these projects in order to identify and secure funding and coordinate in instances where they cross municipal boundaries or involve multiple jurisdictions (such as provision of sidewalks along state roads).

Complete Streets Prototype Projects

The plan includes three “Complete Streets” prototype projects. Two of them, Broadway Avenue (City of Pittsburgh and Borough of Dormont) and South Braddock Avenue (Borough of Swissvale), are each contained within one municipality. The third, Freeport Road, is within Blawnox Borough and O’Hara Township. The City of Pittsburgh has the professional expertise and resources to advance the Broadway Avenue project on its own, but the other two may require assistance from a higher level, either the County or the State. Since Freeport Road is a state road traversing two communities, PennDOT may be the logical implementation agency for this project. South Braddock Avenue in Swissvale is a municipal roadway, but Swissvale has limited professional and financial resources to undertake a project of this magnitude. In this

case, again, it may be logical for the County to act as a “Champion” for the project to at least identify and assist with securing funding and professional assistance to the Borough in moving the project forward.