
BICYCLING AND WALKING IN THE SPRINGFIELD METROPOLITAN AREA

A REPORT CARD

OVERALL GRADE: C- (BASE YEAR 2007/2008)

DEFINE A COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

C-

The Springfield area bicycle route system has not grown in the past two years, though Ozark Greenways has continued its effort to build a network of trails throughout the metro area with the addition of the Jordan Creek Trailhead at the Cruise Dog Park. Greene County has signed 26 miles as "Share the Road." In 2008, Greene County signed 9.5 miles of the FR 94/104 corridor from Strafford to State Hwy H, including Valley Water Mill, and 3.5 miles of FR 182 between Battlefield and Republic as well. MoDOT has added "Share the Road" signage to West Bypass and Route 13, while the construction of West Bypass included a wider travel lane. The City of Springfield City Council adopted an updated Policy for Bicyclists on Public Facilities in Springfield. In 2005, the City of Springfield received an Honorable Mention for its application regarding Bicycle Friendly Communities, and is currently working on an application for 2009. In regards to pedestrian facilities, the City of Springfield continues to add 2 miles a year to its school sidewalk program and 2000 feet a year to its streetscape program. Surrounding communities have utilized the transportation enhancement program to add sidewalks, especially around the schools.

The first Ozarks Regional Bike Summit was held in February of 2008 and presented a format for encouraging local decision makers to consider bicycling in the other facets of their responsibilities. This meeting also brainstormed ways in which to promote bicycling in the Springfield metropolitan area.

INTEGRATE THE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK TO THE EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

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In August of 2008, City of Springfield voters renewed a 1/8th cent transportation tax that has dedicated \$1 million plus \$0.5 million from MoDOT as match for a total \$1.5 million for pedestrian connections. This is the first time in the history of this tax that monies have been specifically designated for such projects. Projects that will likely receiving funding from this tax include those which make connections between portions of the existing system, mainly connections between transit and walking. It is hoped that in the future additional funding will be dedicated for bicycle improvements as well.

The new diverging diamond interchange at 13 and I-44 will be built to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. Though the trail connection will be lost during construction, trail access will be maintained after the improvements to the 60/65 interchange are completed. The widening of West Bypass also accommodated bicyclists with a wider travel lane, but not a striped bicycle lane.

Enhancement awards over the past two years have provided funding to a number of bicycle and pedestrian improvements, however not many of the projects are yet completed. These include Phase I of the South Dry Sac Greenway, the Fassnight Creek Greenway Trail, sidewalks for Truman Elementary on the north side of Springfield, and sidewalks at various points along Glenstone Avenue, as well as streetscape improvements which have included bicycle lanes and sidewalks. A number of improvements funded through enhancements also have been awarded to the communities surrounding Springfield, generally for sidewalk development.

Several new projects have not taken into account bicycle and pedestrian improvements, including the Highway M bridge improvement, and the interchange redesign of Glenstone and Republic Road.

PROMOTE BICYCLING AS AN ECO-TOURISM MODE FOCUSING ON HISTORICAL AND NATURAL ATTRACTIONS IN GREENE AND CHRISTIAN COUNTIES

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This has continued to be a point of discussion in the Springfield metropolitan area. Twice, now, Springfield has been part of the Tour of Missouri. This ride showcases to the world the types of facilities which are located in Springfield and the surrounding areas.

In 2008, the Springfield area was accepted by the National Park Service to participate in “Bikes and Binoculars.”

The Tour de Bass is an event included in Bass Pro’s Outdoor Fitness Festival Week. It has been described as “the traditional SpringBike fall century on steroids. It featured five ride lengths, sag vehicles, an ambulance, local restaurants, and 550 registered riders.” The first Tour de Bass was held in October 2008 and was sponsored by local hospital St. John’s Hospital.

Discussion has begun on the creation of a landmark bridge over Springfield Lake. This bridge is intended to be iconic, representing what the Ozarks has to offer.

Valley Water Mill has seen the completion of a 2.5 mile walking trail at the site of the new Watershed Center. A pedestrian bridge was dedicated in November, connecting two components of the trail. The Watershed Center will be the first of its kind in the state, highlighting nature and the importance of a quality environment at the site.

ENHANCE SAFETY THROUGH EDUCATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

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The Safe Routes to School program has been embraced by the Willard School system in five schools using Physical Education class time and Tigers Need Time (TNT) sessions. This program educates students on the proper operation of a bicycle and how to safely ride a bike on the road system.

A before and after school program has existed for several years at Cowden Elementary School in Springfield, plus the Ozark School system has been developing plans for its five schools.

Ozark Greenways has also been working to incorporate the trail system into the Safe Routes to School program to encourage more area children to walk and bicycle to school.

Springfield Public Works has a program in place to complete sidewalks within a ½ mile of all R-XII elementary schools. As part of this program, walking maps for each school have been created, distributed to students and parents, and displayed in each elementary school. In 2008, maps were distributed to 33 elementary schools.

The Springfield Police Department employs “*so many*” police officers on bicycles. There are also “*a number*” of park rangers on bicycles. Most Springfield Police Officers are well versed in traffic law and have an understanding in how bicyclists fit into that, though this is not necessarily emphasized. Two officers are certified as instructors through the International Police Officers Mountain Bicycling Association.

Missouri State University employs 10 bicycle officers, though this can be affected by weather. Drury University employs 2 bicycle officers.

PROMOTE BICYCLING AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

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One Road I course was held in 2008, and two were held in 2007. The Springfield area has two League of American Bicyclist certified instructors who conduct these classes.

Several bike rodeos were conducted in 2008. One was held in conjunction with the Bike Springfield event in the spring. The Boy Scouts sponsored one. A number have been conducted by Lori Minor with the Traffic Safety Alliance in schools and at neighborhood events. Safe Kids and St. John’s Trauma Services have given away helmets and done helmet fittings.

IMPROVE THE BICYCLE-PEDESTRIAN TRANSIT LINK

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City Utilities of Springfield operates the transit system inside the city limits of Springfield. Together with Springfield Public Works, CU has been adding sidewalks, shelters, and bus stop pads to make navigation to bus stops easier and safer. Every bus has a two-bike rack installed.

FUNDING

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Ozark Greenways has established a relationship with the Community Foundation of the Ozarks and is a recipient of their Stewardship Ozarks Grant. Federal enhancement dollars are locally distributed, guaranteeing that projects are completed within the metropolitan area. Unfortunately, the last round of enhancement funding, as provided in SAFETEA-LU, was allocated in 2008. The

next availability of this funding source will either come with the reauthorization of the surface transportation bill or from a possible economic stimulus package. As mentioned elsewhere, Springfield has dedicated a portion of its 1/8th cent transportation tax to pedestrian improvements. Efforts should continue in the future to see that this also happens with renewal of the ¼ cent capital improvement tax and the funding is allocated for bicycle improvements as well.

The City of Springfield also funds sidewalk improvements with a ¼-cent sales tax. The sidewalks targeted are located within ½-mile of the schools, on at least one side of the street. With the last ¼-cent program, Springfield was able to add another 27,630 linear feet, or just over 5 miles, of sidewalk to the system. The following schools benefited from this program: Cowden, Pershing, Weller, Mark Twain, Wilder, Glendale, Sherwood, Fremont, Parkview High School, Portland, Watkins, Disney, and Study Middle School.

In order to see a larger increase in bicycle and pedestrian improvements, the City of Springfield needs a dedicated maintenance fund for these and other road facilities. Without a dedicated maintenance fund, the expansion of bicycle and pedestrian is much less likely.

DESTINATIONS AND ROUTE DESIGNATION

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The Lake Springfield Bridge will one day become a destination for bicyclists, even though it now seems a long way off. Springfield was the finishing line for the Tour of Missouri, bringing many spectators to the region, though the numbers for this are unknown.

Greene County has signed a number of additional routes as “Share the Road.” Springfield publishes a map of current bike routes within the City.

The Frisco Highline Trail from Springfield to Bolivar is a destination for many cyclists. Through “Share the Road” signs on State Highway 13, the Frisco Highline also connects Springfield to the Katy Trail in central Missouri.

CONNECTIONS FROM NEIGHBORHOODS/TRAILS

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The City of Springfield adopted in 2008 an amendment to the subdivision regulations to require easements for linear park trails that are on the master plan and trail connections from park trails to public streets in new subdivisions. Greene County has adopted this policy three years ago.

Ozark Greenways added three neighborhood connections to the trails in 2008. These were funded by the Community Foundation of the Ozarks in 2007 and installed in 2008. Two were on South Creek, going to Carver and Holland, and one was at Ashcroft Estates, connecting Truman to South Dry Sac.

COMPLETE STREETS

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The Ozarks Transportation Organization has adopted street design standards which accommodate all modes of transportation, however the Board of Directors has not formally adopted a specific Complete Streets Policy.

Ozark Greenways supports adoption of Complete Streets at both the state and local levels.

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS

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Neighborhood schools provide more opportunity for students to travel to school by walking or bicycling. The City of Springfield Vision 20/20 Plan encourages Springfield Public Schools to utilize a neighborhood school model. SPS, however, appears not to have a formal policy relating to neighborhood schools. In the past, several neighborhood schools have been closed due to fewer capacity needs. The school district is also supporting the concept of "Choice Schools" which would mean more students attending schools beyond a normal walking or biking distance.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

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During the Christmas season of 2007, three churches acting independently, but with the cooperation of the Boys and Girls Clubs and the Springfield School System gave away about 750 department-store quality bicycles to children.

The Kevin Umlaf Foundation also gives away about 7 high quality, equipped bicycles every year.

Repeat from above:

The Safe Routes to School program has been embraced by the Willard School system in five schools using Physical Education class time and Tigers Need Time (TNT) sessions. This program educates students on the proper operation of a bicycle and how to safely ride a bike on the road system.

A before and after school program has existed for several years at Cowden Elementary School in Springfield, plus the Ozark School system has been developing plans for its five schools.

Ozark Greenways has also been working to incorporate the trail system into the Safe Routes to School program to encourage more area children to walk and bicycle to school.

Also information on Springfield's new SRTS non-infrastructure grant, which was awarded at the end of 2008.

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sidewalk to the system. The following schools benefited from this program: Cowden, Pershing, Weller, Mark Twain, Wilder, Glendale, Sherwood, Fremont, Parkview High School, Portland, Watkins, Disney, and Study Middle School.

The City of Springfield also receives a FedEx grant through its SafeKids program in the amount of \$10,000 each year. Crossings at and near Springfield Public Schools have also been upgraded to include LED signalization at 6 locations, pedestrian countdown signal heads with 84 installed in 2006 and another 84 in 2007, and 300 sign post panels were funded to be installed in 2008.

Through a Safe Routes to School grant, the City of Springfield received funding in 2007 to install 56 new school zone speed beacons in Springfield, and to install 2 new and 10 replacement beacons in Greene County. In 2008, Springfield was awarded funding for a school education program.

EDUCATION FOR VEHICLE OPERATORS, CYCLISTS AND PEDESTRIANS, AND POLICE

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Currently, the League of American Bicyclists Road I course is the only locally available education program to cyclists. Minimal mention is made of cyclists in vehicle education programs. It is recommended that bicycling be integrated into driver's education programs as well as traffic school. Springfield Police Officers are versed, however, in the rules of the road for bicyclists in addition to motorists.

Ozark Greenways has a grant from the Community Foundation of the Ozarks to develop some education programs. They also have received an enhancement grant, which over the past few years has allowed Ozark Greenways to do some limited bicycle education and encouragement.

INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF BIKE, BUS, WALK TO WORK WEEK DRAMATICALLY

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The 2008 Bike, Bus, Walk to Work week saw a large increase in participation. Local sponsorships and incentives were attributed with some of this increase. Schools, businesses and government are all encouraged to participate. Due to the success in 2008, future plans are to expand Bike, Bus, Walk to Work week even more.

INCENTIVES FOR ALL EMPLOYERS

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The 2008 year saw the first inclusion of a bicycle related commuter transportation benefit within the IRS tax code. Previously, this was associated only with vanpooling and transit.

The Ozarks Transportation Organization also launched, in 2008, a website dedicated to commuting in southwest Missouri. OzarksCommute.com is a web/map-based matching program for commuters that also highlights transit and bicycle routes in the region. This site offers employers a custom portal for their employees as well.

UNIVERSITY/STUDENT DISCOUNTS/PROMOTE LOANER BIKES

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No action has taken place on this yet, though MSU has constructed a bike path system throughout its campus. There is very limited bike parking, however, and students can be ticketed if their bicycles are not correctly stowed.

MORE FORMAL APPROVAL FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF BIKE POLICY

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Currently, the City of Springfield Policy for Bicyclists on Public Facilities has only been accepted as being complete. It is desired that the recommendations and guidelines in this policy be implemented and used.

PLANNING/ZONING CHANGES FOR DENSITY/SPRAWL AND INCLUDE BIKE/PED

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City of Springfield planners are beginning to consider increasing the density within the city limits, but no formal policies have yet been adopted.

CITY BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN COORDINATOR

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No action has taken place on this yet.

PROVIDE A CONTINUOUS BICYCLE SYSTEM THAT IS COORDINATED WITH THE OTO AND SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS

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The Ozarks Transportation Organization continues to work with local bicycle and pedestrian groups to ensure each group is working toward the same goals. Staff also works with individual communities in their efforts to develop and expand their internal bicycle and pedestrian systems. Funding is a key component to creating these connections.

PROVIDE A BICYCLE SYSTEM THAT PROVIDES SAFE DIRECT ROUTES CONNECTING
DESIRED DESTINATIONS FOR PEOPLE

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Springfield has dedicated a portion of its 1/8th cent transportation tax to pedestrian improvements. Efforts should continue in the future to see that this also happens with renewal of the ¼ cent capital improvement tax and the funding is allocated for bicycle improvements as well. Further discussion on routes and destinations are planned in 2009.

PROVIDE A BICYCLING SYSTEM THAT PROMOTES BICYCLING AS ONE OF SEVERAL
MODES OF TRANSPORTATION FOR EMPLOYMENT, SCHOOL, SHOPPING, SOCIAL,
RECREATION, AND OTHER TRIP PURPOSES

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As additional goals are met from elsewhere in this document, it is thought that this goal will be more achievable. As the streets are made more accommodating, as bicyclists and motorists alike are better educated, and as land use patterns densify, the ability to both cycle for utility and recreation should improve.

PROVIDE A BICYCLE FACILITY SYSTEM DESIGNED TO PERMIT MOTORISTS AND
BICYCLISTS TO SAFELY COEXIST ON THE SAME ROADWAYS

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Much discussion revolves around how and when motorists and bicyclists should coexist. A complete system would best integrate the appropriate facilities for each trip a bicyclist is making. At different times, an off-road path, a bike lane, or a shared roadway may be the best option.

PROVIDE FOR THE EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION OF A BICYCLE SYSTEM AND POLICY

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The adoption of the Policy for Bicyclists on Public Facilities by the City of Springfield City Council was a first step in this endeavor, but now there is a need for a more complete approach to the integration of bicycle and pedestrian friendly policies throughout the City's decision-making process. This plan and policy encourages a coordinated system that provides safe direct routes connecting desired destinations, promotes bicycling as one of several modes of transportation, and is designed to permit motorists and bicyclists to safely coexist on the same roadways. Administration of the bicycle system is under the City Traffic Engineer and a committee of the Traffic Advisory Board is set up to provide policy guidance for bicycle and pedestrian issues.