



LSL Planning, Inc.

Community Planning Consultants

September 26, 2013

LeNolon Edge, AICP
Director
Planning and Building Services
Jasper County
358 Third Avenue
Ridgeland, SC 29936

Re: Jasper County Comprehensive Plan: Sub-Task #8: Bicycle and Pedestrian Strategy

Mr. Edge:

Included below is a draft of the bicycle and pedestrian accommodations section and strategy. Please let me know if you have any questions or comments concerning the draft language. Each of the eight strategies at the end will be reflected in the table at the end of the chapter.

8.4 BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

From a national perspective, bicycle and pedestrian facilities are being prioritized for a multitude of reasons. Issues such as high gas prices, traffic congestion, environmental concerns, and a growing interest in health and wellness, help to put focus on an increased need and desire for non-motorized transportation options. At the state level, the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) has adopted bicycle guidelines that recognize the value of bicycle transportation for air quality and traffic reduction and has encouraged each MPO and COG to include bicycle facilities in the local transportation plan. State and local jurisdictions are working cooperatively to identify suitable bicycle improvements to incorporate in highway projects. At the local level, the County and its municipalities continue to improve downtown and public facility connections through sidewalk and recreational trail projects.

There are public benefits to be gained by Jasper County's long-term planning of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. In public health terms, high levels of obesity and low overall health rankings are an alarming current statistic. Connectivity, access and safe routes for foot and bike travel allow both children and adults the opportunity for needed physical activity. Not only important for health reasons, expanding these types of accommodations in existing developed areas offers the simple opportunity of access and mobility. For new development, sidewalks, pathways and other accommodations add to the beauty and amenity value of a community.

GENERAL FACILITY TYPES

There are a variety of bicycle and pedestrian accommodation types that are considered in planning efforts for non-motorized transportation. For the purposes of a higher-level Comprehensive Plan, general facilities include the following:

Sidewalks: Sidewalks are paved walkways adjacent to roadways. Sidewalks are particularly important for basic mobility of people with disabilities and are the most fundamental element of the pedestrian network. Sidewalks provide a safer area for pedestrian travel separate from vehicle traffic.

Shared Use Paths: Shared-use paths are paved pathways separate from the roadway network that are designed for both walking and bicycling and may provide additional width over a standard sidewalk. These facilities may be constructed adjacent to roads, through parks or open space areas, along water features or along linear corridors such as abandoned railroad lines.

Bike Lanes: Bike lanes are marked routes along roadways designated for use by bicyclists. They can also be buffered by the addition of striped space between the bike lane and the auto lane, particularly important on high speed and high volume roads or truck routes. In many cases in South Carolina, urban roads have been resurfaced and re-striped to include four-foot bicycle lanes by the SCDOT.

Shoulder bikeways: Typically found in rural areas, shoulder bikeways are paved roadways with striped shoulders (4'+) wide enough for bicycle travel. Where requested by local governments and where feasible, SCDOT has included four-foot wide paved shoulders in highway improvement projects. In addition, two-foot paved shoulders are provided on many routes as an overall safety upgrade, and this practice benefits cyclists as well.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Jasper County and its municipalities have a limited and fragmented bicycle and pedestrian network. However, both the City of Hardeeville the Town of Ridgeland have carried out important downtown sidewalk connectivity projects, connecting neighborhood residents to services and students to their schools. A recent trail project in Sergeant Jasper Park connects the park facility to the Hardeeville school facilities. Another grant funded project at the Tarboro Community Center included a walking and fitness trail. While important projects have occurred with limited resources, additional planning and construction is anticipated in the years to come. Current issues surrounding bicycle and pedestrian accommodations are the following:

- No regional connectivity.
- Isolated recreational and exercise trails.
- Unsafe crossing at intersections and other locations.

PLANNING

A long term strategy is recommended to provide the population with adequate facilities. The goal of this section is a connected bicycle and pedestrian facility network; specifically, expansion of the network to provide continuous direct routes and convenient connections between destinations, including homes, schools, parks, shopping areas, public services, recreational opportunities, transit hubs and regional travel routes. General strategies to ensure a future network include:

Future Development: Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity between future residential neighborhoods and nearby commercial areas, parks, and schools should be required, encouraged and incentivized and built by private developers.

Redevelopment/Infill: Bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be incentivized as part of redevelopment and infill projects to provide a continuous sidewalk network throughout denser urban areas.

Regional Connectivity: Shared use paths, bike lanes and shoulder bikeways should be incorporated on new roadways and retrofitted on older roadways to complete the pedestrian and bicycle system.

Diverse Accommodations: Sidewalks, pathways, crossings and bicycle routes should be designed so people, including those with mobility and sensory impairments, can easily find a direct route to a destination and so delays are minimized. Sidewalks, shared use paths, bike lanes, shoulders and crossings should be designed and built to be free of hazards and to minimize conflicts with external factors such as vehicles and buildings. These facilities should permit the mobility of residents of all ages and abilities. Bicyclists have a range of skill levels, and facilities should be designed with a goal of providing for the widest range of ages, ability, and experience possible. Facilities should benefit residents across the spectrum of age, economic status, physical ability, neighborhood location, and daily activity.

Coordination: The County should continue to coordinate with the Jasper County School District (including Safe Routes to School program), LRTA, major employers, SCDOT and LCOG to plan a multi-modal and coordinated approach to non-motorized transportation planning.

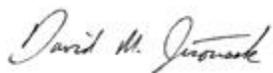
Facilities and Safety: Bicycle and pedestrian facilities should have, where appropriate, pavement markings, traffic calming measures (if needed to keep vehicle speeds low), and some type of intersection crossing treatments. Bike parking facilities should be provided in well traveled areas and public spaces. A wayfinding and signage system is a key component of a navigable environment and would inform pedestrians and cyclists of recommended walking and cycling routes while also enhancing the identity of Jasper County and its municipalities.

Funding and Grants: There are a number of local, state and federal grants available for expansion of facilities. These opportunities should be researched and funding should be sought.

Planning: Jasper County should conduct a formal long term bicycle and pedestrian planning process.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions by phone (616-336-8176) or by email at jjirousek@lsplanning.com.

Sincerely,



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Senior Planner