

# Memorandum



**To:** Carl Springer and Mat Dolata

**CC:**

**From:** Mia Birk and Rory Renfro

**Date:** October 30, 2008

**Re:** Forest Grove TSP – Recommended Pedestrian and Bicycle Programs

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## RECOMMENDED PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE PROGRAMS

Becoming a truly pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly community requires a multi-faceted approach, including strategies beyond traditional infrastructure projects. Utilizing several innovative approaches, Forest Grove has potential to become a model bicycling and walking community.

The programmatic recommendations build on the comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle network described earlier in this Plan. The sections below largely focus on non-infrastructure strategies for improving walking and bicycling (although some physical infrastructure needs are discussed). These strategies include providing children safe and convenient walking and bicycling routes to school, along with educational and enforcement measures to get the message out about safe walking, bicycling and driving. This section also proposes that the City promote its bikeway and walkway network. Building the system is a major investment; encouraging people to use the system makes the investment worthwhile.

The sections below describe recommended pedestrian and bicycle programs for the City of Forest Grove, while the project tables in the Bicycle and Pedestrian System chapters (Chapters 5 and 6) include associated cost estimates.

### Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SR2S) refers to multi-disciplinary programs aimed at promoting walking and bicycling to school, and improving traffic safety around school areas through education, incentives, increased law enforcement, and engineering measures. SR2S programs typically involve partnerships among municipalities, school districts, community and parent volunteers, and law enforcement agencies. Forest Grove's SR2S efforts are a vital component of the Transportation System Plan, as they will facilitate implementation and funding for specific improvements that will help increase bicyclist and pedestrian safety and encourage fewer auto trips.

Forest Grove has a vested interest in encouraging school children to lead active lifestyles. SR2S programs offer ancillary benefits to neighborhoods by helping to slow traffic and provide reasonable facilities for walking and bicycling by all age groups.

## **Why Do We Need SR2S?**

The purpose of an SR2S program is to identify and improve school commute routes, to increase the number of students who walk and/or bicycle to school in Forest Grove, to lessen traffic congestion, and to improve health. Since the 1980s, the number of children walking or bicycling to school has declined sharply due to urban growth patterns, unsafe design, and general lifestyle changes emphasizing more driving. Walking and bicycling to school are healthy alternatives to being driven, and can provide a sense of independence for children who may otherwise be restricted by school bus or parents' schedules.

## **What are the Benefits of an SR2S Program?**

The primary benefit of implementing an SR2S program is the resulting increase in safety for children walking and riding bicycles to school. A comprehensive strategy based on a cooperative effort between school officials, parents, residents and City planning staff will enable that specific school-related traffic calming projects and pedestrian and bicycle improvements will become priority projects eligible for State, Federal or other grant funding. Involvement of various stakeholders throughout the Safe Routes process increases the likelihood for implementation of needed safety improvements. While the primary focus of an SR2S program is improving safety for children walking and bicycling to school, these safety benefits often extend to all age and activity groups. In addition to safety enhancements, an SR2S program helps integrate physical activity into the everyday routine of school children. Health concerns related to sedentary lifestyles have become the focus of efforts both statewide and nationally. Identifying and improving routes for children to safely walk and bicycle to school is also one of the most cost-effective means of reducing weekday morning traffic congestion and can help reduce auto-related pollution.

## **Local Coordination and Involvement**

The continued success of Forest Grove's SR2S programs hinges on buy-in from individuals and organizations throughout the community. While each individual school will have unique concerns and goals for improving the SR2S program, an organizational strategy promoting idea-sharing between schools can be more effective than several isolated school groups. The key components of an effective SR2S program include champions (individuals at each school who spearhead their school's organizing effort), stakeholders (a team of people from an individual school), and a task force made up of all stakeholder teams in the community.

The basic components of an SR2S program include the following:

### Education

Curriculum programs implemented in schools can teach children the basics regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety. Classroom educational materials should be presented in a variety of formats (safety videos, printed materials, and classroom activities), and should continually be updated to make use of the most recent educational tools available. Classroom education programs should also be expanded to promote the health and environmental benefits of bicycling and walking. Outside schools, educational materials should be developed for different audiences, including elected officials (describing the benefits of and need for an SR2S program), and parents (proper school drop-off procedures and safety for their children).

Educational programs should be linked with events and incentive programs when appropriate, and students should be included in task force activities, such as mapping locations for improvements.

Involving students can serve as an educational tool and can also provide the task force with meaningful data that is useful for prioritizing improvements. Educational programs, and especially on-bike training, should be expanded to more schools and for more hours per year.

### Encouragement

School commute events and frequent commuter contests are used to encourage participation. Programs that may be implemented include a “Walking School Bus Program,” which involves parents taking turns walking (or bicycling) with groups of children to school. A good opportunity to promote an SR2S program is during International Walk to School Day, held annually in early October. Organized Bike and Walk to School Days should be held monthly or weekly to keep the momentum going and encourage more children and their parents to walk or bike to school. Prizes or drawings offered to participants have been used in some schools as an incentive. Events related to bicycling and walking should be incorporated into existing curricula when practical. Involving local celebrities or publishing the names of student participants in events can be effective means of encouraging student involvement. Promotion is also key to successful events. Ensuring that parents are aware of events (whether classroom-specific or district-wide) is crucial to gaining maximum student participation.

Other contests and event ideas to encourage bicycling and walking to school include:

- Competitions in which classrooms compete for the highest percentage of students walking or bicycling to school;
- Themed or seasonal events;
- Keeping classroom logs of the number of miles biked and walked by children and plotting these distances on a map of Oregon or the U.S.

### Enforcement

Various techniques are employed to ensure traffic laws are obeyed. The SR2S task force and stakeholder teams should develop priority areas in need of enforcement by the Forest Grove Police Department. One option to avoid the cost of providing physical police presence is to use innovative signage, such as in-roadway crosswalk signs or in-roadway warning lights, alerting motorists that children may be crossing, or speed feedback signs indicating to motorists their current speed. Neighborhood speed watch programs – in which community members borrow a radar device and use it to record the license plate numbers of speeding vehicles – can also be effective.

### Engineering

To provide safe access for children, school sites should have designated pedestrian access points that do not require students to cross in front of drop-off and pick-up traffic. Locations identified through the SR2S process should be considered for SR2S grant funding.

Streetscape improvements should ensure adequate sight distance on all access routes, crossings, and intersections. School zone designations for speed limits should be an element of a comprehensive circulation plan that also includes school-based student as well as Police Department crossing guard programs and identification of safe routes for bicycling and walking to school.

## Funding

While much of the initial work involved in starting an SR2S program can be conducted by stakeholder team volunteers, funding will eventually be needed to plan and implement physical improvements, hold events, and develop and implement educational programs and materials.

### Capital Funding

Capital funding for infrastructure improvements is available from a variety of sources. The SR2S task force should work with City staff to identify all potential funding sources and to provide support on funding requests. Forest Grove may be able to pursue Federal funds made available with the SR2S Program established in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). This section of the bill provides \$612 million in funding over a five-year period with no state receiving less than \$1 million per fiscal year. Other portions of SAFETEA-LU, such as Transportation Enhancements (TE) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds may also provide funding opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian projects.

### Program Funding

As Forest Grove's SR2S program develops, funding will be needed to support the overall program, including coordination assistance, purchasing incentives, printing newsletters, staffing events, and developing educational materials. Both school-based and program-based funding will be essential for success. When program funding is pursued, it should be emphasized that an SR2S program benefits the entire community by relieving traffic congestion, contributing to cleaner air, improving alternative transportation routes, and improving the health and safety of children. In order to maintain and expand the program, new sources of funding need to be obtained. Other possible funding sources include:

- *Corporations and Businesses:* Local corporations and businesses may be able to provide cash, prizes, and/or donations, such as printing services, through community giving or other programs. Parents or other members of stakeholder teams may be a good source for contacting companies.
- *Foundations:* Institutions throughout the country provide funding to non-profit organizations. The Foundation Center is a national organization dedicated to collecting and communicating information about philanthropy in the U.S., and is an excellent source for researching potential foundation funding sources. Potential foundation funding sources can be searched by geographic region and by category. Applicable categories include transportation, health, environment, and community building.
- *Individuals:* Statistically, individuals give more money than corporations and foundations combined. A local fund drive can quickly reach a large number of people if outreach is conducted by stakeholder team members.
- *Events:* Many SR2S programs have raised funds by holding special events, often using a related themed event such as a walkathon or a bicycling event. More traditional fundraising efforts, such as bake sales, concerts, and talent shows can also help raise funds.
- *Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Districts:* Many PTAs have funds to distribute to school programs, and often schools have their own safety funding sources. Stakeholder teams should work with local PTAs and school districts to determine if grant application opportunities exist.

- *City and County Funds:* Some cities and counties allocate funds to support SR2S programs. Some also allocate a portion of their local Transportation Enhancement funds to SR2S educational programs.
- *State Funds:* Each state receives Federal Highway Safety Funds, also called 402 Funds. Although each state handles this program differently, most funding is available on a competitive basis for projects that increase road safety.

### Wayfinding Signage Plan

The ability to navigate through a town or city is informed by landmarks, natural features, and other visual cues. A signage system is a low-cost yet highly-visible component of a navigable environment. Wayfinding signs would inform pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, while also enhancing Forest Grove’s identity. An effective wayfinding system communicates information clearly and concisely. Placing signs throughout the city indicating to bicyclists and pedestrians their direction of travel, location of destinations, and the time/distance to those destinations (see Figure 1) would increase users’ comfort and accessibility to the bicycle and pedestrian system.



Figure 1 - Wayfinding signage concept

### Spot Improvement Program

Having the ability to respond quickly to the requests of bicyclists and pedestrians will enhance Forest Grove’s standing as a bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly community. The City could fund a Spot Improvement Program once a year, with all funds dedicated to smaller spot improvements identified by City staff and residents. Such improvements might include:

- Striping and signing of a particular path to increase safety and improve the path user compliance;
- Adding bicycle parking to locations that currently lack appropriate facilities;
- Sidewalk infill to safely connect vital pedestrian routes, especially in school areas;
- Adding directional and informational signage along paths, sidewalks, and bicycle routes;
- Re-striping bicycle lanes or crosswalks where the striping has worn away;
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements in parks.

### Accommodating People with Disabilities

With the advent of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, the nation recognized the need to provide equal access to all residents. Since its inception, ADA has significantly changed design requirements for the construction of public space. However, much of the pedestrian environment built prior to the ADA’s inception does not adequately accommodate people with disabilities. The City of Forest Grove’s approach is to gradually change this situation through land development project requirements, unrelated capital street improvement projects, and capital projects that specifically retrofit antiquated public pedestrian facilities.

It is important to note that a pedestrian environment strategically built to be accessible for people with disabilities is also more accessible for all. Curb ramps for instance, can accommodate strollers, shopping carts and dollies for the movement of goods. Accessible intersection crossings can increase safety for people regardless of ability. In recognition of this, the City's philosophical approach is to create pedestrian environments that are attractive, functional, and accessible to *all* people.

### **Developing an ADA Transition Plan**

As a part of ADA implementation, the Justice Department requires that all municipal jurisdictions have an ADA Transition Plan, intended to spell out the City's intentional retrofitting of its built environment to an accessible state. While the TSP's Pedestrian Element is purposely written to accommodate people with disabilities, a separate document with greater specificity is required. The ADA Transition Plan should use all relevant strategies of the TSP as well as other current practices that have merit.

To adequately plan the pedestrian environment for people with disabilities, the ADA Transition Plan must take into account each of the disabilities and the limitations they present. It is also important to be aware of how planning for people with one disability affects people with another. For example, gradual ramps and smooth transitions to the street help people in wheelchairs, but present challenges for the visually-impaired if they cannot easily find the end of the sidewalk and beginning of the street. The Plan should also consider the needs of children and older adults.

### **Bikeway/Walkway Maintenance**

Maintaining and improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities is just as important as building the system. The City should thoroughly inventory the existing bikeway/walkway network to identify needed improvements (e.g., cracked or heaving pavement, intersections lacking curb ramps) and dedicate resources on a continual basis to address these problem areas. The City's Street Fund represents a current funding source for these improvement types.

On- and off-street bikeways require regular maintenance and repair as needed. On-street bikeways are typically maintained as part of normal roadway maintenance programs, and extra emphasis should be put on keeping bike lanes and roadway shoulders clear of debris and keeping vegetation overgrowth from blocking visibility or creeping into the roadway. Shared use path maintenance activities typically include trash removal, trimming of trees and limbs extending into the pathway, and addressing pavement deterioration issues. Forest Grove should regularly evaluate its bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and promptly address maintenance needs.

## **Education Programs**

### **School-Based Education Programs**

A school-based bicycle and pedestrian education program educates students about the rules of the road, proper bicycle equipment use, bicycling skills, street crossing skills, and the benefits of bicycling and walking. These types of education programs are usually sponsored by a joint City/school district committee comprised of appointed parents, teachers, student representatives, administrators, police, active bicyclists and Engineering Department staff. These programs can also be rolled into a SR2S Program.

Education need not be limited to younger schoolchildren. Adult bicycle education and safety programs can be developed from existing courses, such as League of American Bicyclists courses. Additionally, the Forest Grove Police Department may want to utilize adult bicycle education programs as a “bicycle traffic school” in lieu of fines for bicycle-related traffic violations.

### **Safety Handbook**

Safety handbooks are generally developed as part of a school-based bicycle and pedestrian safety program. Handbooks may include a circulation map of a district or neighborhood, showing preferred circulation and parking patterns, suggested routes to school, locations of crosswalks, crossing guards and signalized intersections, instructions for bicycle maintenance and use, instructions for fitting and wearing a helmet, instructions for crossing the street, and lists of emergency and school numbers. A general handbook can be published by the City and used by each school in conjunction with the school-specific map.

### **Educate Motorists, City Staff, Maintenance and Construction Crews**

Motorist education on the rights of bicyclists and pedestrians is limited. Many motorists mistakenly believe, for example, that bicyclists do not have a right to ride in travel lanes and that they should be riding on sidewalks. Education about the rights and responsibilities of pedestrians and cyclists can include:

- Incorporating bicycle and pedestrian safety into traffic school curriculum;
- Producing a brochure on bicycle and pedestrian safety and laws for public distribution;
- Enforcing traffic laws for cyclists;
- Providing bicycle and pedestrian planning training for all City planners and engineers;
- Working with contractors, subcontractors and City maintenance and utility crews to ensure they understand the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians, and follow standard procedures when working on or adjacent to roadways and walkways (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 - Bicycle/pedestrian detour sign

### **Bicycle Patrol Unit**

The City of Forest Grove may want to work with the Police Department, local businesses and neighborhood groups to establish local bicycle patrol units. A bicycle patrol unit may be an official law enforcement unit, a private security guard patrol, or a volunteer network. Bicycles are an excellent community policing tool, as officers on bikes are often viewed as more approachable, thus improving trust and relations between citizens and police. Bicycle patrol units can work closely with citizens to address concerns before they become problems. These units can have a direct impact on bicycle safety by enforcing bicycle traffic laws (e.g., wrong-way riding, sidewalk riding, obeying traffic controls, children wearing helmets), and providing bicycle safety education.

## Encouragement Programs

Strategies for community involvement in bicycle/pedestrian improvements are important to ensure broad-based support – which translates into political support – to help secure financial resources. Private sector involvement in raising awareness of the benefits of bicycling and walking can range from small incremental activities by non-profit groups, to efforts by the largest employers in the City. Specific programs are described below.

## Employer Incentive Programs

Employer incentive programs encouraging employees to walk and bike to work include strategies such as providing bicycle lockers and shower facilities, offering more flexible arrival/departure times, and incentives such as monthly raffle contests. The City may offer incentives to employers to institute these programs through air quality credits, lowered parking requirements, reduced traffic mitigation fees, or other means.

## Community Bikeway/Walkway Adoption

Community Bikeway/Walkway Adoption programs are similar to the widely-instituted Adopt-a-Highway programs throughout the country. These programs identify local individuals, organizations, or businesses interested in “adopting” a bikeway or walkway. Adopting a facility means that a person or group would be responsible for the facility’s maintenance either through direct action or as the source of funding for the City’s maintenance of that facility. For example, members of a local recreation group might volunteer every other weekend to sweep a bikeway and identify and address larger maintenance needs. Or, a local bike shop might adopt a bikeway by providing funding for its maintenance costs. The managers of an adopted bikeway or walkway would be allowed to post their name on signs along the route to display their commitment to bicycling and walking in Forest Grove.

## Multi-Modal Access Guide

A multi-modal access guide provides concise customized information on how to reach specific destinations with an emphasis on bicycling, walking and transit. Access guides can be as simple as a map printed on the back as a business card or as complex as a multi-page packet distributed to employees. Access guides commonly include:

- An area map depicting bus stops, recommended walking and bicycling routes, landmarks, facilities such as restrooms and drinking fountains, locations of bicycle and vehicle parking, and major roads;
- Information on transit service, including frequency, fares, accepted payment methods, first and last runs, schedules, phone numbers, and websites of transit service providers and taxis;
- “Walking times” or “riding times” between destinations;
- Accessibility information for people with disabilities.

Best practices include using easily-understandable graphics, providing specific step-by-step travel directions, providing parking location and pricing information, and providing information about the benefits of walking and bicycling. High-quality access guides are concise and accurate, and should incorporate input from key stakeholders such as public transportation operators, public officials, employees, staff who will be distributing the access guide, and those with disabilities.

## Business Incentives for Bicycling and Walking

Incentive programs encouraging bicycling and walking to local businesses can be developed in coordination with individual businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, and bicycle advocacy groups. Such efforts may include:

- Creating promotional events such as “Bicycle to the Grocery Store” days, when cyclists get vouchers for, or discounts on items in the store;
- Holding an annual community event to encourage residents to replace one car trip a week with a bicycle trip. This type of event could be integrated with current special events like Founders Day;
- Developing, promoting and publicizing bicycle commuter services, such as bike shops selling commute gear, bikes-on-transit policies, and regular escorted commute rides;
- Creating an annual commuter challenge for area businesses.

## Walk- and Bike-to-School Days

The City and School District should encourage residents to participate in the annual International Walk-to-School Day held each October. The City and School District could also create a Bike-to-School Day. These events raise the profile of bicycling and walking among children (see Figure 3). Local Bike- and Walk-to-Work days can be held annually in conjunction with school-related events.



Figure 3 - Walk-to-School days raise the profile of walking among children

## Bike Fairs, Organized Rides, and Races

Hosting bike fairs, organized rides, and races in Forest Grove (such as Cycle Oregon and Nike’s LIVESTRONG Challenge), can raise the profile of bicycling in the area and provide entertainment for all ages at the same time. Bike fairs and races provide opportunities to educate and encourage current and potential bicyclists. These events can also bring visitors to Forest Grove that may also contribute to the local economy. These events could be sponsored and implemented through collaboration between the City and local employers.

## Individualized Marketing Programs

Individualized marketing programs use innovative approaches to encourage environmentally-friendly travel. The concept, used in more than 300 communities around the world, identifies individuals who want to change the way they travel, and uses personal, individualized contact to motivate them to think about their travel options. These programs provide customized information and training to help people take transit, bike, walk or carpool. Individualized marketing programs provide many benefits including individual health and financial improvements, and community-wide benefits such as reduced air pollution and enhanced community safety.

Individualized marketing programs give participants just the information they ask for to help them get started, or to keep on walking, bicycling, taking transit or carpooling. Those who do not want information are left alone. Materials are delivered by a “Travel Ambassador” in the most efficient and cost effective way – by bicycle. Travel Ambassadors are cross-trained to answer participants’ questions concerning all alternative travel modes. Depending on the information requested by an

individual participant, marketing materials could include maps identifying safe, convenient and direct walking and bicycling routes in Forest Grove, public bicycle parking locations, TriMet maps and schedules, and free bus or MAX passes. Travel Ambassadors would contact program participants periodically to answer questions about alternative transportation. The City could also periodically survey participants about their travel habits to gauge the program's success.

## **Enforcement Programs**

The best protection for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling along and across streets are motorists who are aware of and follow laws regarding bicycle/pedestrian right-of-way. However, many people are unaware of these laws.

Targeted enforcement action should be focused in areas with high bicycle and pedestrian volumes or where non-motorized travelers are especially vulnerable. Law enforcement efforts should be targeted during periods and at locations where motorists and the general public will become aware of bicycle/pedestrian laws and their penalties. These efforts should occur at least four times per year and last one week. Focused enforcement should also take place at the start of the school year. An effective form of targeted enforcement is the use of a police officer posing as a pedestrian crossing the street. Motorists who do not yield to the officer are ticketed by other police officers further down the street. Ticketing cars parked across the sidewalk or within striped bicycle lanes represents another effective enforcement tool.

All targeted enforcement actions should be coordinated with the Public Works Department. The Forest Grove Police Department should also be surveyed for input on appropriate educational material, advisory and warning signs, and other tools to help them accomplish their mission. Finally, it is recommended that the Police Department vigorously pursue legal action against motorists who cause a bicycle/pedestrian injury or fatality.