

Purpose of this Study

The WAMPO Regional Pathway System Plan (RPSP) establishes a backbone system to connect existing and future bicycle/pedestrian facilities throughout the metropolitan planning area. The plan was originally developed in 2007 as a cooperative effort that included extensive participation by various stakeholders including the Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WAMPO), federal, state, and transit agency representatives, pathway users, and local jurisdictions throughout the region. It was revised in 2011 to reflect changes made to the system between 2007 and 2011, including updates made to the WAMPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) 2035, and to include a section on emerging opportunities and issues in the region.

The principal function of WAMPO is to serve as a regional forum for transportation decision-making. Therefore, the key function of this plan is to serve as a decision-making tool. It is not the intent of this plan to be prescriptive in policy recommendations or facility decisions. Rather, decisions that impact development policy, facility type, and facility location are left to the discretion of local jurisdictions as they attempt to do what is in the best interest of their communities. This plan does, however, identify opportunities to serve the current and future transportation needs of the region.

The plan attempts to address irreconcilable views on bicycle/pedestrian facility development and use that exist in the general public. However, this plan will not satisfy all viewpoints. Due to the nature of the plan, trail users provided the vast majority of input. As such, WAMPO acknowledges that the plan more thoroughly addresses the needs and viewpoints of facility users than those of non-users.

The Plan incorporates current and previous plans by individual jurisdictions with new regional, system-level pathway planning approaches. Specifically, this document addresses the following:

- ▶ How can we effectively address bicycling and walking needs across a 1,050 square mile region?
- ▶ Do bicycles belong on streets with cars or off the roadways, on sidewalks and trails with pedestrians?
- ▶ Is this plan addressing transportation or recreation needs?
- ▶ Do trails, bicycle lanes and rural roadways all provide transportation options? How can they be combined to create a seamless, regional network of bicycle travel options?
- ▶ What types of public infrastructure and private land use improvements will enhance pedestrian travel opportunities?
- ▶ How can site-specific projects and local-level planning efforts be incorporated into the regional system?
- ▶ What else is needed in addition to building new facilities?

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- ▶ How does this plan relate to the updated WAMPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) 2035?
- ▶ What performance measures will be used to gauge the effectiveness of strategies and activities identified in the WAMPO MTP 2035?
- ▶ What are emerging issues and considerations facing the region?
- ▶ Where do we start?

Status Snapshot of Pathway Development in the WAMPO Region				
	Existing Miles of Pathway Facilities In Region	Additional Miles Proposed In Existing Local Plans	Consultant Recommendations per Regional Plan	Opportunities for Flexibility through Local Implementation
Off-Road Multi-Use Paths	109	461	164	178 - 228
On-Street Bicycle Lanes	8	0	67	5 - 40
Paved Shoulders	35	0	129	114 - 129

This plan's proposed system of primary corridors tried to balance the ability of the region to construct new miles of off-road trails with the need for bicycle accommodation on area streets and roadways. By incorporating on-street bicycle facilities, the system may better serve regional travel needs and a basic system may be able to be completed more cost-effectively.

This plan is tailored to answer these questions and meet the needs of the WAMPO region for creating connectivity, optimizing safety, and encouraging bicycling and walking to local and regional destinations.

The Regional Pathway System Plan update is intended to be adopted by the WAMPO Transportation Policy Body, but will need the ongoing support of the 24 local jurisdictions to move forward with the implementation of its recommendations. The regional approach provides a framework for identifying locations where major pathway improvements are appropriate and should be prioritized for implementation by one or more jurisdictions. Local buy-in will determine which projects move forward when, and local communities will need to address site-specific design and implementation details.

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Key observations of existing conditions in the WAMPO region and recommendations for enhanced bicycling and walking opportunities include the following:

Regional Development Patterns

- ▶ The majority of facilities built to date have all been off-road pathways with little attention paid to the accommodation of bicyclists on area streets.
- ▶ Sidewalks are provided on at least one side of most arterial streets; however, sidewalk accommodation is lacking on many local streets.
- ▶ Growth patterns in this area have created a transportation network including only major arterial corridors, local streets and cul-de-sacs. In most parts of the WAMPO region, connector or collector streets are missing from the network. This emphasis solely on regional vehicular mobility makes bicycle travel very difficult, and limits circulation and access for motorists.
- ▶ Major geographical barriers exist throughout the region. Rivers, railroads and numerous expressway corridors require expensive grade-separated crossings for bicyclists and pedestrians. At-grade crossings on major arterial streets are difficult for all modes to cross due to multiple lanes of fast-moving traffic and infrequent spacing of traffic signals.
- ▶ Political barriers are also an issue in this region. Pathway projects can only move forward with local support and buy-in. Unfortunately, many residents of the region view bicycling and walking as special interest recreational activities and do not yet recognize the value of fully incorporating facilities for these activities into transportation infrastructure.

Network Connectivity

- ▶ Individual pieces of pathway have been built across the region, but they are not connected to form a system or network that people can use to travel from place to place.
- ▶ The easy pieces of trails have been built. Now the region and its municipalities need to prioritize missing gaps in the off-road trail network and focus on using the roadway network to create an interconnected system that links to regional destinations.
- ▶ For bicycling and walking to be effective, the network needs to be fine-grained. This means designated north/south corridors need to be spaced periodically and connected with frequent east/west corridors to provide people with travel options between various origins and destinations. Focusing on one facility as a region-wide solution won't work.
- ▶ Facilities in the network may be of various types (multi-use paths, on-street bicycle lanes, paved shoulders, etc.) but need seamless connections between segments to facilitate cross-town travel.
- ▶ The network should have facilities spaced more closely in areas with a higher population density, more potential destinations, and shorter trip distances. Getting

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pathway users into and through Downtown Wichita on designated facilities and linking various parts of the region with its center should be a high priority.

- ▶ Emphasis needs to be placed on creating a primary system of longer pathway corridors. Once this system is in place, shorter secondary corridors and local projects can connect into the system and increase its effectiveness.
- ▶ Approximately 65 miles of priority missing links (17 projects) have been identified for immediate implementation to complete an initial system of primary corridors.

Implementation

- ▶ To move forward, the WAMPO Regional Pathway System Plan requires plan ownership and support, interagency coordination and local-level implementation of the recommended projects.
- ▶ Relying solely on federal grants to fully fund the bicycle/pedestrian transportation system is unrealistic. Many projects can and should be completed as incidental parts of larger roadway improvement projects.
- ▶ Several streets in the region have been over-designed to carry more vehicle trips than what is necessary or appropriate. Retrofitting these corridors by restriping multi-lane streets to include bicycle lanes is a cost effective and successful way to create a fine-grained pathway network. Minor arterials with moderate traffic volumes are logical street candidates for such “road diet” lane restriping.
- ▶ The miles of new off-road pathways suggested in local plans far exceed the region’s funding capabilities. Regional priorities should initially focus on those corridors that complete missing gaps in the system.
- ▶ Other large projects, particularly those following waterways, should remain part of the long-term vision for the pathway system, but will require significant changes in growth patterns and development policies across multiple jurisdictions before they can become a reality.
- ▶ Additional smaller steps such as education, encouragement, mapping, facility maintenance, and enhanced intersection improvements can and should be undertaken immediately to improve bicycling and walking conditions throughout the WAMPO region.
- ▶ Maintenance of facilities is another key issue. Generally speaking, the funding sources available to WAMPO do not allow for project maintenance costs, only project development. Adequate funding for the maintenance of pathway facilities should be fully considered and programmed by each jurisdiction as projects are proposed and developed.