

FHWA's Livable Communities Case Study Series

Coordinated Stakeholder Engagement in the Dallas-Fort Worth Region Spurs Active Transportation Facilities

Challenge—Increasing Demand and Rising Safety Concerns Highlight Need for Coordinated Planning

Public demand for bicycle and pedestrian facilities has grown steadily over the past decade in the Dallas-Fort Worth area of North Texas. This demand, coupled with disconnected facilities between communities, rapid population growth, congested roadways, and increases in pedestrian and cyclist injuries across the region revealed a need to improve the active transportation infrastructure and better incorporate walking and cycling concerns into all transportation plans and projects.

Solution—Multi-pronged Approach: Engaging the Public and Local Leaders, Utilizing Existing Assets and Funds, and Collaborating across Communities

Realizing the importance of a meaningful bicycle and pedestrian planning framework, the city of Fort Worth published [Bike Fort Worth: A Comprehensive Bicycling Transportation Plan](#) in 2009. Two years later, the city of Dallas published the [2011 Dallas Bike Plan](#). With plans in place, both cities, along with the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region, began working on comprehensive approaches to address walking and bicycling needs in the 12-county region.

Fort Worth Plans and Invests in Active Transportation Infrastructure

Since publishing the 2009 bicycle plan, Fort Worth has made ongoing improvements to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. In April 2013, Fort Worth launched a bike share program that currently provides 300 bicycles at 35 stations throughout four major Fort Worth neighborhoods, including downtown and Texas Christian University. In May 2014, Fort Worth voters approved a ballot proposition allocating over \$219 million for transportation improvements, of which approximately \$20 million is specifically allocated for pedestrian, bikeway, and shared use path projects. In addition the bond package includes various other street and transportation related projects that will improve the pedestrian experience. The [2014 Fort Worth bond program](#) collects property tax revenues for the following investments: pedestrian infrastructure improvements (e.g., crosswalks, lighting, landscaping), new and improved bicycle infrastructure, new and/or replacement sidewalks in high pedestrian activity areas, and connections between local streets and pedestrian/bike pathways to TEX Rail stations.

In October 2014 the Fort Worth City Council is expected to adopt the [Walk! Fort Worth Pedestrian Transportation Plan](#). The Plan recommends appropriate pedestrian infrastructure and improved design standards, identifies highest priority needs to direct funding, and recommends targeted policies.

Dallas Capitalizes on Community Engagement and Existing Assets

Following publication of the [2011 Dallas Bike Plan](#), which includes 840 miles of on-street bikeways and 287 miles of off-street shared use paths, Dallas began a focused community engagement effort—using a variety of public

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engagement techniques, including community workshops, a visual essay contest, and a public opinion survey—to solicit ideas and feedback on pedestrian and bicycle needs throughout the city. Feedback from that effort led to several [complete streets pilot projects](#) as well as a draft of the [City of Dallas Complete Streets Design Manual](#) which is planned for adoption in the fall of 2014. In June 2014, Dallas also finished converting the [Continental Avenue Bridge](#), a former automobile bridge, into a park which serves as a key gateway and linkage between downtown and west Dallas. In addition to connecting residents to the Trinity River Corridor, the park provides access to a variety of fitness and children’s programs, events, food trucks and seating areas.

NCTCOG Engages Local Leaders and Facilitates Cross-Community Collaboration

In the October 2013, NCTCOG facilitated a regional bicycle/pedestrian planning workshop with representatives of 18 cities and agencies located in three counties surrounding the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. NCTCOG digitized the communities’ plans with geographic information systems (GIS) software and merged the files into a composite map of existing and planned bikeways and paths. Through a charrette process, the communities and D/FW Airport representatives discussed ways they could coordinate bicycle and pedestrian planning, and partner on specific projects to connect the cities to each other and to the airport.

NCTCOG also hosted a [highly-publicized meeting](#) with the mayors of Fort Worth, Arlington, Grand Prairie, Irving, and Dallas, representing a combined population of 2.8 million residents, to discuss completing critical gaps in a 64-mile, regional pedestrian and bicycle pathway corridor extending from downtown Fort Worth on the west to downtown Dallas on the east. Currently approximately 40 miles of the corridor exist in segments or have committed funding for construction. The five mayors pledged to coordinate efforts to complete the critical gaps in the regional shared use path, including several linkages to commuter rail stations along the Trinity Railway Express. Not only will the regional path serve as a transportation commuting option to major destinations and employment centers, the Mayors emphasized the economic development and tourism aspects of the regional path, in addition to benefits to public health and the reduction of roadway congestion that the active transportation route will offer.

Conclusion—Coordinated Regional Approach Builds Better Infrastructure and Secures Long-Term Commitments to Maintenance and Growth

A combination of targeted bicycle and pedestrian funding strategies, strong public engagement, cross-community collaboration, and commitments from leaders has led to the significant growth of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the Dallas-Fort Worth region. Fort Worth and Dallas are both determined that official bicycle and pedestrian planning is necessary to elicit real change, and through regional collaboration and committed local leaders the region is building long-term, sustained improvements.

Change has not always been a smooth and easy process, and the region has learned to encourage collaboration while integrating unique circumstances found in each locality. For example, some communities favor off-road facilities, whereas others emphasize more on-road bikeways. In some communities there is debate about the use of [Complete Streets](#) terms and concepts and the competing interests between motorists and cyclists in the public right-of-way. However, respecting such differences while bridging gaps between the communities has helped the region to create a more cohesive bicycle and pedestrian network. Moving forward, Fort Worth, Dallas, NCTCOG, and communities throughout the region will continue to educate residents about the significant progress that has been accomplished, as well as promote what is planned for the future.

Federal Highway Administration: www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability
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