

JACTS

Non-Motorized Transportation

Transportation facilities no longer mean just accommodating a vehicle powered by a combustion engine. Pedestrian and non-motorized facilities are important modes of travel for a variety of reasons. Providing and maintaining these facilities is an important aspect of transportation planning. This includes adequate pedestrian crossings on roadways, provision of safe, efficient travel for all bicyclists, preservation of future trail corridors, and implementation of a comprehensive non-motorized system for the entire county.

The Michigan Legislature passed “Complete Streets” legislation which will add additional planning and development requirements to transportation projects to ensure consideration of all users of the roadway system. The legislation is currently in the implementation phase and its impacts are not fully known at this time. It should be noted that the Region 2 Planning Commission, the Jackson County Department of Transportation, and the City of Jackson all passed Complete Streets resolutions in 2006.

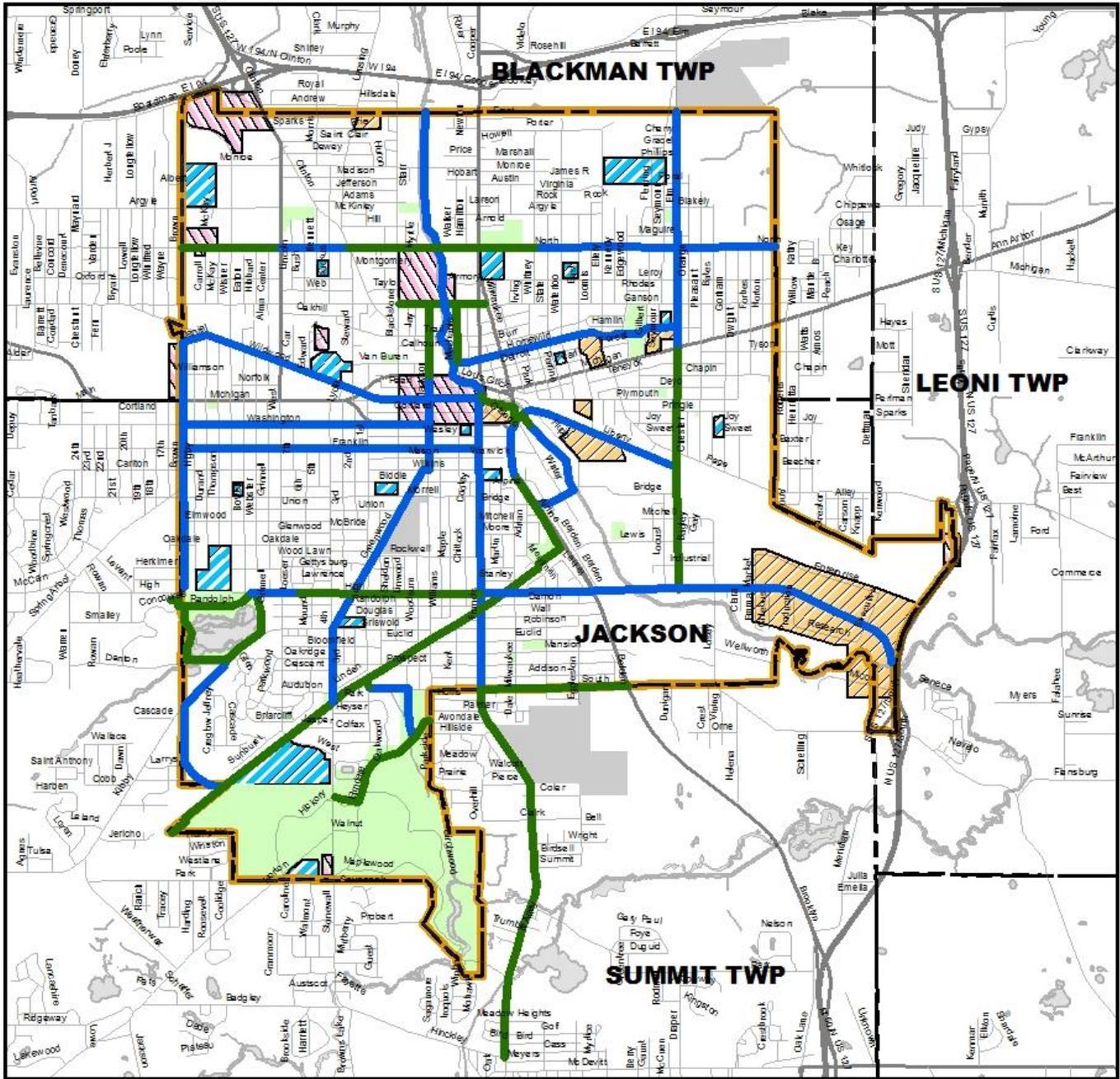
PEDESTRIAN

Pedestrian movement is generally accommodated by the presence of sidewalks, or non-motorized paths combined with the use of pedestrian crossing signals at major intersections. The City of Jackson has implemented a limited number of pedestrian “countdown signals” that provide pedestrians with the number of seconds left on the walk phase as well as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for installation of not only sidewalk ramps at crosswalks, but also the addition of detectable warning surfaces within the sidewalk ramp.

BICYCLING

Bicycling plays an important role in providing inexpensive, energy efficient, pollution free transport throughout the Jackson metropolitan area. The existing street network is used to serve both the cyclist and motorist. The City of Jackson has developed a destination-based bike plan that incorporates bike lanes onto some the roadways that are designated for reconstruction or resurfacing. The bike plan (Figure 6-1) is designed on streets in the city with the intention of providing access to several of the area’s parks and schools. Several of the current and planned street improvements, in both the city and county, now include on-street bike lanes within the existing right-of-way. Currently, more than six (6) miles of city streets have been marked with on-street bike lanes.

The Jackson Area Transportation Authority (JATA) also provides an improved link to the area’s non-motorized system through the installation of bicycle racks on all of the city’s fixed-route buses. This effort, in conjunction with the installation of bike racks around the downtown area adjacent to the JATA bus transfer center, encourages the utilization of both of these modes of transportation.



TRAILS & BIKE ROUTES

- EXISTING
- PROPOSED

DESTINATIONS

- LARGE EMPLOYERS
- ENTERTAINMENT AND SHOPPING
- SCHOOLS
- CEMETERIES
- PARKS
- CITY OF JACKSON



Figure 7-1
CITY OF JACKSON
BIKE PLAN

JACTS

Jackson County has been very active in the Safe Routes to School Program through the Michigan Department of Transportation. Several elementary and middle schools have received funding through this program and many others are developing their “walk to school” plans in order to secure funding.

The Jackson County Regional Trailway Study, 2002, was developed to address the growing need to provide a coordinated effort to improve pedestrian and non-motorized facilities throughout the county. The plan provides a guide to assist area municipalities in developing a trail network that may eventually provide citizens access to and from the city’s Inter-City Trail and the county’s Falling Waters Non-Motorized Trail. The Walkable Communities Task Force has been compiling information from the various reports to develop a county-wide Non-Motorized Plan.

In addition to the network of sidewalks and designated bike lanes, several other transportation and recreational options exist for pedestrians and bicyclists in Jackson County including the following:

- Inter-City Trail: 3.4 mile paved trail extending from Weatherwax Drive through the city to Cooper Street.
- Sparks Foundation County Park: 2.7 miles of unpaved walking and biking trails.
- Falling Waters Non-Motorized Trail: a 10.3 mile, 12-foot wide asphalt trail extending from Weatherwax Drive southward to the Village of Concord.
- Lakeland Trail: a 13-mile unpaved recreational trail that begins in the Waterloo State Recreation Area and extends to the Stockbridge area.
- Armory Arts Walk: 0.4 miles of paved walking trail.
- E. Michigan Avenue Trail: 2 miles of paved trail between Sargent & Young Roads.

FUTURE FORECASTS AND NEEDS

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) continues the planning and funding guidelines from previous legislation that encourages the development of bicycle and other non-motorized transportation facilities.

The Falling Waters Trail (Figure 7-2) is a 10.5 mile linear non-motorized County Park that was recently constructed along the old Michigan Central railroad bed. The trail runs between Weatherwax Drive and the Village of Concord and connects Summit, Spring Arbor and Concord townships and crosses Lime Lake on an old causeway. It connects at its east end to Jackson’s Inter-City Trail which continues east 3 miles into downtown. Future plans include extending the Falling Waters/Intercity Trails northeast towards Stockbridge to hook up to the Great Lake-to-Lake Trail. The Heart of the Lakes Area Recreation Plan identifies trails through the southeast portion of Jackson County that will eventually tie into existing and future trails.

The City of Jackson has developed a downtown non-motorized trail adjacent to the Grand River that connects the downtown area with the Armory Arts development, and eventually the Jackson Lakeland Trail. There are currently negotiations with the Michigan Department of Corrections to connect the Lakeland Trail with the Downtown Jackson Trail across the former Jackson Prison property.

The state transportation law requires that each local unit of government receiving Motor Vehicle Highway Funds (Act 51 funds derived from gasoline and car registration taxes) spend at least one percent of these funds each year for non-motorized facilities. The law also requires that each administering road agency prepare a five-year program for expenditure of available funds. Both the City of Jackson and the Jackson County Road Commission review the addition of bike lanes when programming future road paving and reconstruction projects. Both agencies also review future locations for the addition of non-motorized facilities that meet funding requirements through the Transportation Alternatives program.

The City of Jackson has developed a bikeway plan to accommodate trips on low-volume paved roads between potential bicycle trip generators. These generators include park and recreational facilities, entertainment and shopping, large employers, and other riding environments which act to encourage bicycling activity related to general enjoyment and health benefits. Specific bike paths and programmed improvements to the roadway system were developed with input from the Jackson Fitness Council, Walkable Communities Task Force, bicycling organizations, traffic engineers, planners and from public input. The Jackson County Department of Transportation also considers providing bike lanes if possible when a road is widened or improved. A major issue that agencies continue to struggle with is providing adequate maintenance once these routes are completed.

General policies for improving pedestrian transportation systems in the Jackson area should include:

- High pedestrian activity areas in the CBD should be provided with pedestrian walkways of sufficient capacity that area safe, attractive, and enhance the ease of movement for pedestrians.
- Pedestrian strategies and actions in residential areas should be aimed at improving pedestrian safety and the overall quality of life. Projects that would limit undesirable vehicular activity on specific residential streets as a way of improving the pedestrian environment are encouraged.
- Special care should be given to the removal of built-in barriers to the use of pedestrian systems by elderly and handicapped individuals.
- Pedestrian safety in school zones should be considered through a coordinated effort involving school officials, parents, police, traffic engineers and planners.
- Incorporate non-motorized interests into the design of projects to ensure that as many streets and highways as possible can be safely shared by motorists and bicyclists; and, identify specific routes that would act as connectors between existing non-motorized trails.
- Improve bicycle facilities including storage, shelters, comfort stations and trail heads at major generators and transit hubs.
- Improve safety issues such as drainage gate replacement, rail crossings, pavement markings, and signals.
- Promote access between non-motorized and other modes of transportation, including transit routes.
- Develop a functional network of non-motorized transportation options by identifying and connecting the gaps in the network of trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes.