



Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Pioneer Valley Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan describes the status of active transportation modes in the Pioneer Valley, but more importantly, it highlights actions municipal government, advocacy organizations and individuals can take to encourage people to walk and bicycle in the Pioneer Valley. It also identifies actions public works officials and community leaders can take to engineer safer places for people to walk and bicycle. This combination of policy-related actions and physical projects allows government officials and citizens to collaborate to improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists.

A bicycle and pedestrian transportation plan is concerned with planning for active users who walk or travel by bicycle and other micromobility devices to their desired destinations. This plan is a reference document used by the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff in relation to matters related to active modes of transportation such as walking and bicycling. The plan also serves as a support document for local communities' staff and their elected officials as a helpful tool that advances local projects towards implementation. It helps prioritize the needs of the region by expanding the recommendations born out of the plan into work program tasks, planning projects, and construction activities.

1.1 Background

The first Pioneer Valley Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was completed in 2000 and guided by the federal transportation law: Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st century (TEA 21). In 2008, staff prepared an update on all matters relating to the bicycle and pedestrian plan in the Pioneer Valley region as a comprehensive draft document. That plan update was guided by the federal law: SAFTEA-LU, which included a major addition to the federal transportation law pertaining to pedestrians and bicyclists with a renewed national commitment to Safe Routes to Schools. The current update plan is being developed in concert with the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) legislation also referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

1.1.1 Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan

The Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) outlines the direction of transportation planning and improvements for the Pioneer Valley through the year 2050. It provides the basis for state and federally funded transportation improvement projects and planning studies. As the Pioneer Valley's blueprint for maintaining a safe and efficient transportation system for all modes of travel, this long-range plan identifies the region's goals, strategies, and projects to both enhance and maintain our transportation system. The recent 2024 update of the Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan emphasized the importance of safety and sustainability when planning for the movement of people in regional transportation.



Bicycling and walking are inextricably linked to the quality of life in our communities. The Pioneer Valley region affords some of the best environments for walking and bicycling in the Commonwealth. An expanding network of off-road trails, and vibrant downtowns laced with sidewalks and scenic shared-use roadways create an unmatched potential. As a destination or as a place to call home, the Pioneer Valley offers a wide range of transportation choices. The focus of this plan is on facilitating the design and construction of projects and the implementation of programs that improve safety and encourage bicycling and walking for people of all ages and abilities.

The first goal of the RTP is to provide and maintain a transportation system that is safe for users of all travel modes and eliminates fatalities and serious injuries. It identifies a number of regional needs and strategies to advance these goals. A summary of the bicycle and pedestrian-related RTP needs and strategies are included in the following two tables (Table 1.1, Figure 1.2, Table 1.2). This subset of needs and strategies fall into one of three areas of emphasis: Safety and Security, Movement of People, or Sustainability (Figure 1.1). They are categorized in terms of their urgency into three categories: Immediate, Ongoing and Future.

Table 1.1 Regional Needs Related to Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

Emphasis Area	Regional Needs	Priority Level
Safety and Security	Reverse the trend of the rising number of fatal and incapacitating injury crashes in the region, including disproportionately impacted protected populations and vulnerable users.	Immediate
Safety and Security	Improve access to driver, bicycle, and pedestrian education.	Immediate
Movement of People	Integrate complete streets, parking, and connectivity enhancements into transportation improvements.	Ongoing
Movement of People	Expand the existing bicycle and pedestrian network.	Ongoing
Movement of People	Maintain equity in providing transportation services and access throughout the region.	Ongoing
Movement of People	Increase the use of alternative transportation options to commute to work and school.	Immediate
Sustainability	Encourage travel modes that minimize impacts on air quality, greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption.	Ongoing



Table 1.2 Regional Strategies Focusing on Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

Emphasis Area	Regional Strategies	Priority Level
Safety and Security	Provide infrastructure improvements to support pedestrians, transit users, and bicyclists in roadway and bridge design and the maintenance of existing facilities. Promote connectivity as part of all transportation improvement projects.	Ongoing
Safety and Security	Promote the Massachusetts Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School programs.	Ongoing
Safety and Security	Promote and advance the use of Roadway Safety Audits and Vulnerable Road User Assessments in the Pioneer Valley.	Ongoing
Safety and Security	Develop appropriate educational resources to promote safety for drivers, bicyclists, transit users, and pedestrians.	Immediate
Movement of People	Promote the implementation of separated bicycle lanes and shared use paths.	Ongoing
Movement of People	Assess connectivity for all modes of transportation for downtown areas and village centers. Identify locations for park and ride lots and supporting express transit service.	Ongoing
Movement of People	Work with local communities to incorporate the concepts of Complete Streets and Traffic Calming into transportation improvement projects.	Ongoing
Movement of People	Encourage private connections to the regional bikeway network.	Future

Figure 1.1 Emphasis Areas





1.1.2 Massachusetts Bicycle Plan

The Massachusetts Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board in coordination with MassDOT began the process of revising and updating both the Bicycle Plan and the Pedestrian Plan. The plan prioritizes on- and off-road bicycling improvements and identifies a statewide bicycling network. The network improves multi-modal transportation generally and bicycle transportation specifically, as well as recreation, tourism, and economic vitality. It identifies priority corridors such as the Mass Central New Haven Northampton Canal Line Greenway and The Bay State Greenway.

The 2019 Statewide Bicycle Transportation Plan focused on how and why the State is working to increase the percentage of everyday trips made by bicycling, and eliminate bicyclist fatalities and serious injuries at the same time. The vision of the state plan is: "Biking in Massachusetts will be a safe, comfortable, and convenient option for everyday travel". It identifies two goals:

- 1) Eliminate bicyclist fatalities and serious injuries.
- 2) Increase the percentage of everyday trips made by bicycling.

The Plan lays out an action-oriented strategy built around three key principles:

- 1) Reverse the decades-long practice of prioritizing automobile travel over all other modes by granting people biking the same level of importance as drivers in planning, design and maintenance processes.
- 2) Fix the types of physical gaps and barriers in the transportation system that discourage everyday biking, such as uncomfortable roadway crossings, poorly maintained roads, and lack of bike parking.
- 3) Lead the Commonwealth and support municipalities to advance everyday biking.

1.1.3 Massachusetts Pedestrian Plan

The 2019 Statewide Pedestrian Transportation Plan focused on how and why the State is working to increase the percentage of short trips made by walking and eliminate pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries at the same time. We are all pedestrians at some point on our daily travels - we walk to get to school or work, to our cars and to transit, or simply crossing the street to get a store. This Plan defines a pedestrian as anyone travelling on foot or who uses a wheelchair, cane or other assisted mobility device.

This Plan defines a vision for Massachusetts in which all people have a safe and comfortable walking option for short trips. It sets two statewide goals:

- 1) Eliminate pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries.
- 2) Increase the percentage of short trips made by walking.



There are three underlying principles for this plan:

- 1) Value people walking and their travel needs, especially the most vulnerable - children, elderly, people with disabilities - to ensure they can safely walk.
- 2) Prioritize improvements for people walking by proactively addressing gaps and barriers that discourage walking and are known to increase likelihood of crashes.
- 3) Lead the Commonwealth in meeting the pedestrian plan goals by supporting local municipalities and other agencies to increase everyday walking.

These two plans were followed by one combined statewide bicycle and pedestrian plan update in 2021 that highlights the investments made since 2019 as well as planned future investments for advancing walking and biking in the Commonwealth. In addition to the Plan, a companion document was created, called the Municipal Resource Guide for Walkability. The purpose of the guide is to support cities and towns in their efforts to improve walkability.

1.2 Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

The plan addresses both bicycle and pedestrian regional plans. It also touches upon micromobility programs such as scooter and bike sharing programs. The aim of this plan is to identify projects for implementation and future planning work program tasks to help communities implement projects and find support for applications for available funding opportunities.

1.2.1 Vision

The RTP sets a vision for the Pioneer Valley as a region that strives to develop and maintain a safe, dependable, resilient, environmentally sound, and equitable transportation system for all. It uses performance-based strategies that promote sustainability, health, and economic vitality. The regional bicycle and pedestrian plan supports this vision.

The current updated plan vision is:

“The Pioneer Valley Region is a safe, accessible, and enjoyable place to walk and to ride a bicycle. An expanding network of bikeways, sidewalks, and friendly roadways to a variety of active modes of transport provides residents of all ages with many travel options for reaching any destination.”

1.2.2 Goals

This plan is designed to promote walking and bicycling in the Pioneer Valley as a means to create healthy and sustainable communities. To align our regional vision for the Pioneer Valley Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan with the statewide vision two goals are proposed:



1) To increase walking and cycling trips.



2) To decrease pedestrian and cyclist crashes.



The Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Goals follow the Regional Transportation Plan Needs listed in Table 1.1 and their associated Emphasis Areas. A diagram demonstrating the direct relationship between the Goals and Needs is displayed on the next page in (Figure 1.2).

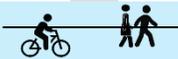
1.2.3 Objectives

The following objectives would aid the efforts to reach the goals of increasing active trips and reducing vulnerable user crashes:

1) Identify roadway and facility improvements that help increase safety for active users.



2) Identify potential corridors for connecting active users' paths to reduce bicycle and pedestrian network gaps.



3) Support local and regional efforts to create a bike and pedestrian friendly environment by promoting educational initiatives related to active transportation modes for all ages and abilities such as Bike Month Events.



The Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Objective follow the Regional Transportation Plan Strategies listed in Table 1.2 and their associated Emphasis Areas. A diagram demonstrating the direct relationship between the Goals and Needs is displayed in the following pages in (Figure 1.2).

1.2.4 Summary

This plan outlines goals and accompanying objectives, strategies and actions designed to make the Pioneer Valley a safer place for pedestrians and bicyclists and, therefore, increase their numbers. The success of this plan depends upon the involvement of all residents of the Valley. The different levels of involvement include:

- Municipal governments must take it upon themselves to implement community-specific recommendations.
- Citizen groups must work with local government to explain how they are affected by government actions and to educate one another about pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- Residents must take the initiative to reduce their reliance on cars, and walk or ride their bikes to work, school, and play.



Figure 1.2 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Goals following Regional Transportation Plan

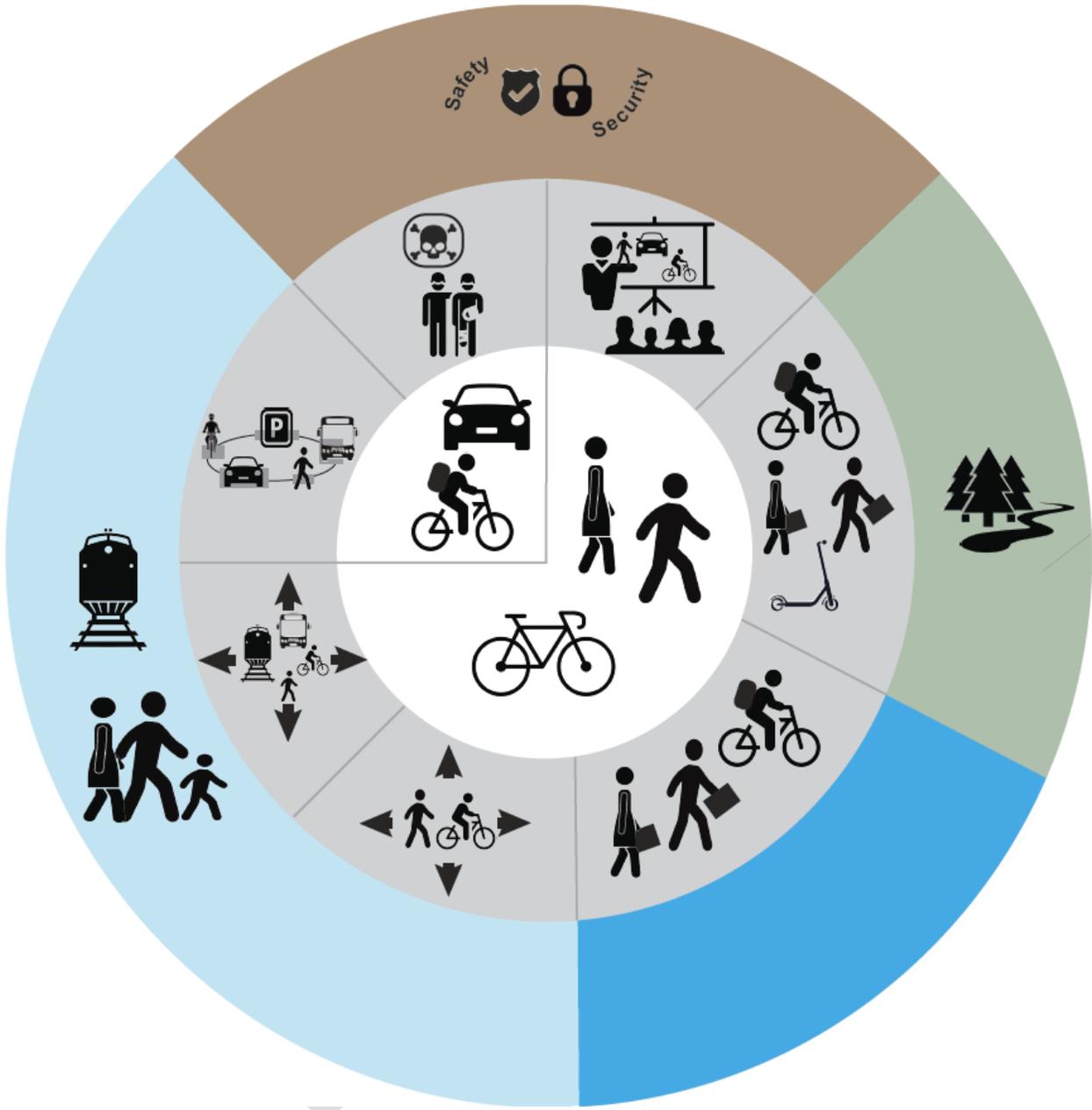




Figure 1.3 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Objectives following Regional Transportation Plan

