



CHAPTER 2 PUBLIC OUTREACH

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2. PUBLIC OUTREACH

The draft Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan for the Pioneer Valley underwent a public review and comment period consistent with the Pioneer Valley Region Public Participation Process. Early in the development of the plan, staff conducted regular presentations to the advisory group and sought members' input for the development of the draft document. Other virtual and in-person events were scheduled during the formal four month long public participation process (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Public Participation Scheduling Chart Initial Draft

	Existing Conditions								Identify Issue and Needs								Draft Bike Ped Plan								MPO Draft Release			
	March				April				May				June				July				August				September			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
 JTC Bike Ped Advisory Board																												
 Website/Social Media																												
 Public Surveys																												
 Municipality Targeted Meetings																												
 Statewide Active Transportation Committee																												
 Pioneer Valley MPO																												

During the Fall of 2024 and Spring of 2025, staff developed a set of informational engagement products to begin the outreach efforts for the process of updating the plan. These products included the following:

- Document Naming Preference Survey
- Webpage: <http://pvmpo.pvpc.org/transportation-planning/Regional-Bicycle-and-Pedestrian-Plan> (A major recent update to the agency website in July 2025 changed the plan's page link to: <https://pvpc.org/our-work/regional-bicycle-and-pedestrian-plan/>)
- Overview Presentation Slides
- Walking and Biking Stated Preference Survey
- Pioneer Valley Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Data Viewer/Editor Interactive Map
- Game of Spin the Wheel for a Chance to Win Million Dollar Bills in Play Money and Allocate them to Various Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Projects of Choice.

In addition to these products, other resources were made available online on a dedicated webpage for the 2025 plan update. A copy of the surveys is included as part of the appendix to this report document.



PVPC reached out to local groups and organizations to present the plan and seek feedback from potential stakeholders. Table 2.1 lists the types of presentations conducted as part of the outreach efforts of the plan.

Table 2.1 – Outreach Events

Date	Event
Monthly	Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Complete Streets Sub-Committee
August 13, 2025 September 10, 2025	Pioneer Valley Joint Transportation Committee Meetings
August 26, 2025 September 23, 2025	Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization Meetings
December 5, 2025	Walk/Bike Springfield
February 2025	Bike/Walk Holyoke Committee Meeting
March 11, 2025	Presentation at Age Friendly Pioneer Valley Committee Virtual Meeting
March, 2025	Amherst Transportation Committee
April 10, 2025	Walk/Bike Springfield
April 25, 2025	UMass-Amherst Informational Labeling at Earth Day Event
Weekly during April 2025	Virtual Meetings in Collaborating with MassBike and Local Bike Advocates Planning for the Regional Bike Month Events
May 2025	Informational Labeling at Select Bike Month Events
May 8, 2025	Presentation at the Western Massachusetts Transportation Advocacy Network Virtual Committee Meeting
May 20, 2025	Presentation at Westfield's Friends of Columbia Rail Trail
June 3, 2025	Presentation at Strong Towns Northampton Chapter Meeting

The PVPC staff offered status updates on the development of the draft plan to advisory committees such as the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Complete Streets (BPCS) Sub-Committee of the Joint Transportation Committee, and the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization. Brief presentations on the progress of various sections of the plan were shared by staff regularly. Comments received during these meetings were incorporated into the plan. The monthly BPCS meetings were particularly useful for getting feedback from local community representatives about the content of the plan. Additionally, targeted outreach meetings were scheduled for special interest groups such as the regional Age Friendly Community committee and the regional Bike Month planning committee. Other special interest groups, such as Strong Towns Northampton and Walk Bike Springfield, were approached by visiting and speaking with their members at their pre-existing local community committee meetings.

The Pioneer Valley MPO released the full draft of the plan on August 26, 2025. Public comments were accepted until September 15, 2025. Both paper and electronic copies of the plan report were made available upon request during the formal public




participation process. The plan's report draft was made available for download from the plan's web page at <https://pvpc.org/our-work/regional-bicycle-and-pedestrian-plan/>. All written comments received about the plan draft report are included later in the Appendix.

Two news releases to the media outlets were sent out in March and May 2025. Both press releases garnered local media attention and a public interview to introduce the planning effort being undertaken as part of the regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2025 Update. The story was picked up by WWLP and MassLive news agencies (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 News Coverage of the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian 2025 Plan Update

PVPC working on two-decade plan for bikers and pedestrians

Updated: May. 22, 2025, 5:59 p.m. | Published: May. 22, 2025, 5:58 p.m.



In 2024, riders set off through Westfield on a rainy Saturday for the Great River Ride, a collection of long-distance bicycle rides hosted by the Friends of the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail that loop into the Hilltowns and other neighboring communities. (Marc St. Onge / The Westfield News, File) The Westfield News

By [Namu Sampath](#) | nsampath@repub.com





The rail trails now scattered throughout the four counties of Western Massachusetts were once just a thought.

Twenty years later, the trails offer scenic escapes to bikers and walkers from the bustle of everyday life.

LOCAL NEWS

PVPC updates Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan

by: [Kavleigh Thomas](#)
Posted: Mar 25, 2025 / 06:09 PM EDT
Updated: Mar 25, 2025 / 06:47 PM EDT

SHARE    

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. (WWLP) – The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) began the process of updating their 2025 Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan.

It's been 17 years since this plan has been upgraded, and the organization hopes to build on the improvements made in biking and walking over those years. They were able to fulfill projects like Bike Share River Walk in Chicopee, and Columbia Greenway in Southwick and Westfield.

[Springfield Police conduct "park and walk" sweep in this neighborhood >](#)

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan now hopes to come up with more projects and policies that will benefit the region's 43 cities and towns. The organization hopes to continue to make streets more safer and accessible for all.

"A safe network to bike and walk makes all the difference, and I think that's come out more and more," said Jefferey McCullough, PVPC Principal Transportation Planner. "Priority is connecting our streets to popular destinations like schools, places of employment. We've seen the growth in bicycling and walking over the last ten years and we want to see that expand into the future."

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission gets nearly \$50 million in federal funding annually to support all new projects. One project currently in the works is the expansion of the Mass Central Rail Trail that goes from Williamsburg to Boston.

The community is looking for community feedback on their plan. To submit your responses or learn more about the plan click [here](#).



2.1 Advisory Committee

The main advisory group is called the “Bicycle, Pedestrian and Complete Streets Sub-Committee” or (BPCS) for short. Members of this group were invited early on in the process to take part in the development of this plan update. Staff engaged the members of this committee in various discussions regarding topics such as: the naming of the report, updating the vision statement, narrowing down the goals and objectives, and prioritizing recommendations. These discussions with members of the advisory committee began in October 2024 and recurred regularly during the scheduled monthly meetings, as work progressed on this report. The following table lists topics presented at monthly meetings in relation to the plan. These topics were added as discussion items to the regular order of business agenda for this committee.

Table 2.2 – Bicycle Pedestrian and Complete Streets Sub-Committee Meetings

Meeting Date	Discussion Topics
October 9, 2024	Introducing the need for a new regional Bike/Ped Plan, RTP goals, updated inventory of facilities and network connections
November 13, 2024	Naming alternatives for the plan document, public outreach opportunities and strategies, regional network planning
December 11, 2024	Update of the previous Vision Statement
February 12, 2025	Public Outreach, Engagement Tools, Visual Survey
March 9, 2025	Pioneer Valley Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Gaps
April 9, 2025	News Release and Local Media Coverage, Upcoming Outreach Events in Amherst and Northampton, Weekly Organizational Meetings to Plan Bike Month Events
May 14, 2025	Ongoing Outreach Activities: Tabeing at Bike Month Events, Survey, Press Releases, Presentations to Local/Regional Organizations
June 11, 2025	Update on Outreach Activities: Tabeing at Bike Month Events, Survey, Press Releases, Presentations to Local/Regional Organizations
August 13, 2025	Prioritizing Strategies Identified Through the Public Outreach

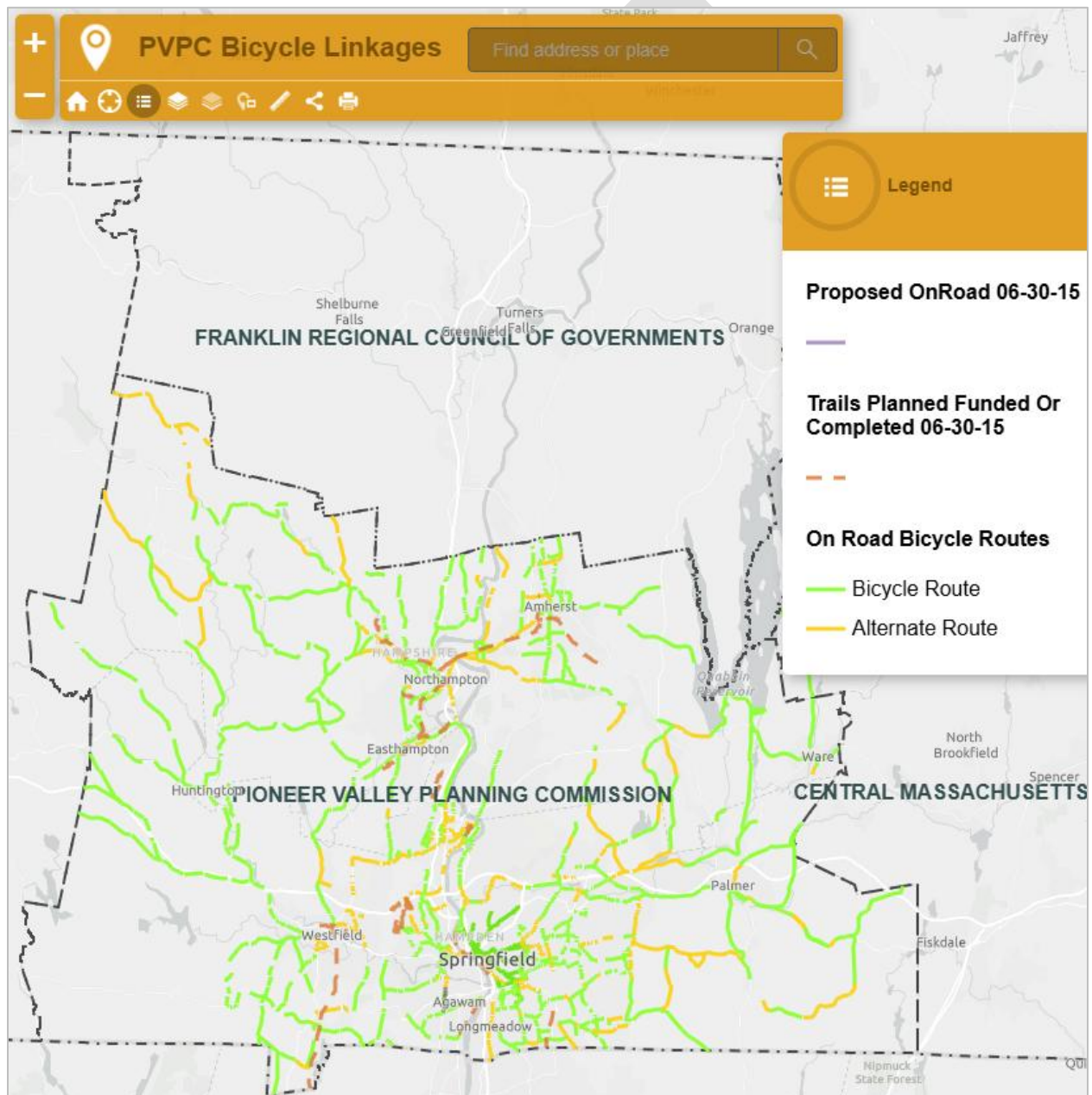
The advisory meetings were held virtually and included a discussion that revolved around specific portions of the plan to seek feedback as well as progress updates about ongoing tasks. Comments and suggestions received from participants were used to update the plan’s vision, goals, needs, strategies and problem statements. A review of existing bicycle and pedestrian network was one of the topics discussed using an interactive map tool (Figure 2.2). The completed draft version of the plan report was later distributed to the JTC and MPO through email and posted to PVPC’s website in August 2025 as we continued to solicit comments from the general public. Public comments received are listed in the Appendix.



2.2 Multiple Approaches to Public Engagement

A diverse array of engagement tools was implemented to reach as many stakeholders as possible. This ranged from multi-lingual announcements to translation services made available for meetings as well as online documents. Opinions of both professional committee members as well as local community members were sought to enrich this plan update. The aging community advocates were approached and encouraged to get involved in the planning process. This included both local planners, professionals from councils on aging, and interested residents that serve on the regional Aging and Dementia Friendly committee.

Figure 2.2 PVPC's Regional Bicycle Linkages Map





2.2.1 In-Person Interactions

Attending established committee meetings as well as presence at various Bike Month events was the strategy chosen by staff to meet people where they are (Table 2.3). This approach has proven to be successful in engaging the public in the planning process (Figures 2.3 and 2.4). This included reaching out to City and Town Transportation Committees, Town and University Sustainability Committees, as well as Bicycle and Pedestrian advocacy groups.

Table 2.3 – Information Table and Public Outreach Opportunities in the Pioneer Valley

Community	Date	Day	Time	Event	Location
UMass-Amherst	4/25/2025	Friday	12:00 PM - 04:00 PM	Earth Day Extravaganza	Goodell Lawn
Amherst	4/26/2025	Saturday	10:00 AM - 04:00 PM	Sustainability Festival	Amherst Town Commons
Northampton	5/14/2025	Wednesday	07:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Northampton Bike Breakfast	Pulaski Park
Westfield	5/14/2025	Wednesday	05:30 PM - 06:30 PM	Mayor's Ride	Westfield City Hall
Springfield	5/17/2025	Saturday	08:00 AM - 11:00 AM	Largest Pancake Breakfast	Berkshire Bank Parking Lot

Figure 2.3 Information Table at the UMass-Amherst Earth Day Event



Figure 2.4 Information Table at the Amherst Sustainability Festival





2.2.1.1 Agency Meetings

During Spring 2025, staff reached out to various agencies and offered to speak about the Bicycle and Pedestrian regional plan update at one of their regularly occurring meetings. Such coordinated events required early planning of at least a month in advance to work with the committee chair or facilitator and be placed on their upcoming committee meeting agenda. Examples of such agency visitations included WalkBike Springfield, a meeting with members of the Strong Towns Northampton Chapter and members of the Friends of the Columbia Rail Trail in Westfield. At these meetings PVPC staff explained the agency's role in developing a regional bicycle and pedestrian plan and provided an overview of the plan's content and purpose, then opened the discussion to committee members. Staff encouraged attendees to fill out the Bike/Pedestrian Habits survey and to provide their feedback via the online wiki map. At the end of the meeting, staff distributed contact information for future follow-up on questions about the plan update.

The WalkBike Springfield meeting participants gave their suggestions, including the need to describe elements of Complete Streets and how the emphasis on roadways being for all users is the major change since the last plan. They were asked to use the feedback form and map to suggest areas that need improvements. The on-line form allows users to upload photo attachments to illustrate the location where improvements are needed.

The Strong Towns group discussed a number of safety concerns that are obstacles to walking and bicycling. Among these, "speeding vehicles" and the need to implement better traffic calming measures and automated speed enforcement. Other issues included: safety for school children walking to school, maintenance, and snow removal on shared-use paths, improved connectivity in the sidewalk network, and having a more active voice by regional agencies (like PVPC) in supporting projects such as "Picture Main Street." Several participants expressed concern for pedestrians around transit stops and felt that there should be better visibility, and that bus stops should have benches. There was concern that the bike racks on PVT buses were often full, and the bus app should provide notice to prospective riders. They stated that larger-scale private developments needed better pedestrian connectivity and identified the need to do a better job of maintaining existing bike lanes and sidewalks. Regionally, they suggested that we should work collectively to change social norms around distracted driving. They requested that PVPC work with municipal officials to secure funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects and programs.

The Westfield meeting attendees identified two main priorities. Their first priority was the need to complete the gaps in the New Haven to Northampton Canal Greenway. The group encouraged PVPC to actively engage with its counterparts along the corridor in CT to assure that the New Haven to Northampton Canal Greenway remained a priority corridor and that every effort was made to remove obstacles and support initiatives that would continue to advance this important project. The second priority the committee focused on was challenges in expanding safe travel options



on local roads and the desire to make more connections to local destinations including downtown residential neighborhoods, Westfield State University, the Big Y shopping plaza, local schools, and areas north of the central business district. The City recently adopted a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan and there was support for complete streets initiatives including safer crosswalks and better nighttime visibility. With respect to shared-use paths, there was a lengthy discussion of the growth in E-bikes and the need to find a way to quantify/qualify associated problems and develop strategies to effectively manage the speed of the many new types of users on the trail. Other issues discussed included: children walking to school, graffiti on the trail, winter use of shared-use paths, and improved connectivity in the sidewalk network, measuring/quantifying the economic impact of the Greenway on the local economy and the use of PVPC drones to capture camera footage to promote and expand local tourism.

2.2.1.2 Outdoor Public Events

Bringing the information about the regional plan to the public is key in engaging those who otherwise would not know about it and are unaware of how to become a part of the ongoing regional planning process. In-person public informational tabling efforts were scheduled to coincide with some of the most popular Bike Month outdoor events in May. This included Northampton's Community Bike Breakfast, Westfield's Mayor's Ride, and Springfield's Valet Bike Parking at the World's Largest Pancake Breakfast (Figures 2.5, 2.6, 2.7).

Figure 2.5 Information Table at the Northampton Community Bike Breakfast Event



Figure 2.6 Information Table at the Westfield Mayor's Ride Event





Figure 2.7 Information Table at the Springfield Pancake Breakfast Event





2.2.2 Virtual Meetings

Staff presented the plan at a couple of virtual public meetings held by existing committees and special interest groups. The first virtual presentation was to the committee of the Age and Dementia Friendly Pioneer Valley as an effort to begin engaging local Councils on Aging that held active walking clubs who are invested in implementing pedestrian friendly neighborhoods. The presentation slides were uploaded to the plan's online page and made available to public. The second presentation was to members of the Western Massachusetts Transportation Advocacy Network.

Some of the challenges identified by the Age and Dementia Friendly group included: having to drive to a walkable or bikable facility in Ware, park accessibility issues, school children blocking entry and exit of the Holyoke Senior Center as they walk home at the end of school day making it difficult for the elderly to navigate through the crowd. Some group members requested the installation of high visibility crosswalks such as raised crosswalks to improve crossings. A suggestion was made for placement of a rumble strip before crosswalks to alert drivers at locations where some have not been obeying the existing stop sign. Attendees also identified a need for an education campaign regarding yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks.

2.2.3 Engagement Tools

A variety of tools were employed to engage stakeholders and the public in the planning process. The three main tools used were: maps, surveys, and spin the wheel game. The survey was available in both print as well as in digital format online. The online map version focused on collecting feedback and identifying gaps and seeking solutions to current problems in the regional bicycle and pedestrian network. These tools served as a conversation starter to get to know what kind of barriers residents faced when they chose to use active transportation modes of travel to reach their day to day destinations. The following sections in this chapter of the report describe the three main tools and the outreach efforts. Further details regarding the outcome of the outreach efforts is discussed later with the survey result analysis in the section about evaluation in Chapter Four of this report. All survey questions' summary results are included in the Appendix.

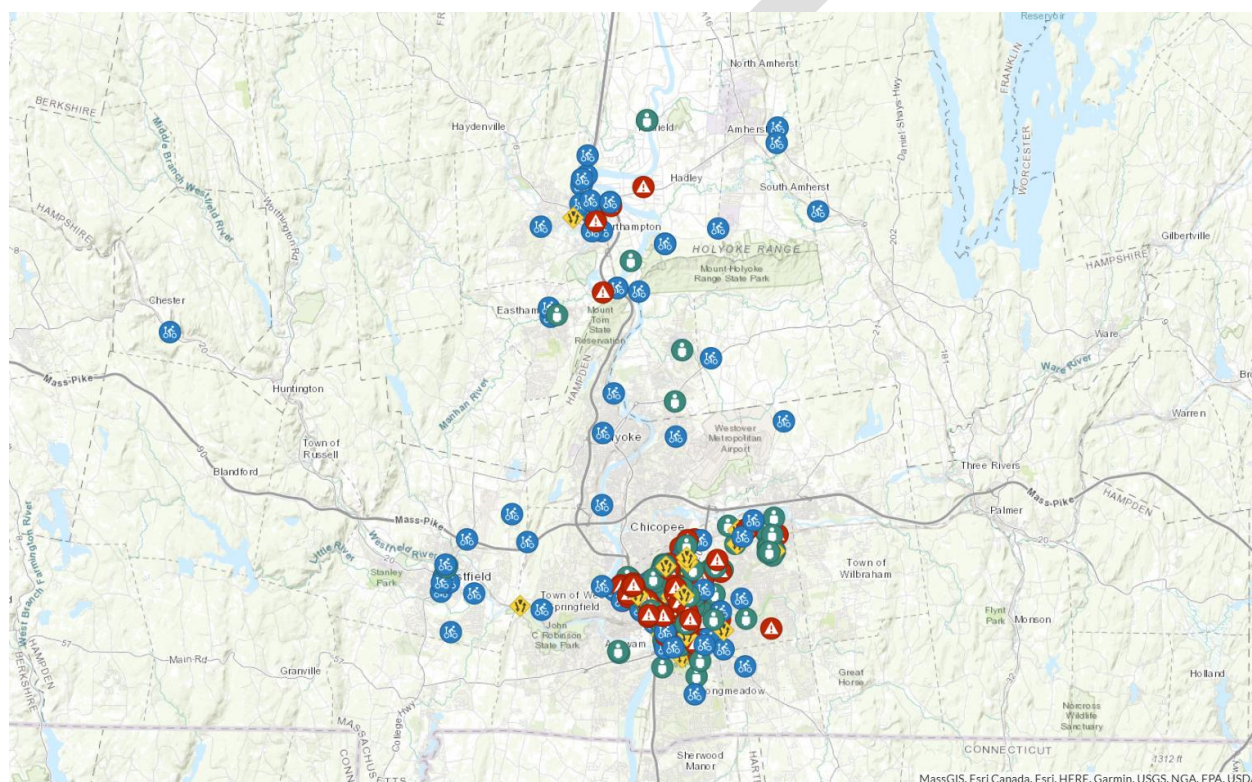
2.2.3.1 Interactive Web Map

A regional online interactive map was published to the PVPC website (Figure 2.8). It is titled the "Pioneer Valley Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2025 Update Data Viewer/Input Wiki Map". All promotional materials pointed to this web map and provided links to instructions about how to provide input and suggest improvements. This map serves as a reference for existing conditions. Often called a wiki-map, it offers a representation of the region's non-motorized network. It includes several layers of data that can be turned off and on to highlight various components of the regional active transportation network. There were four types of improvements to select from:



Bicycle, Pedestrian, Road Crossing, or Traffic/Road. Color-coded circles enclose icons that represent each type of improvement requested and mark the location of the public input. Clicking on an icon opens a window box to reveal comments received on page 2 of the information box. A glance at the regional wiki map below shows that there are many bicycle related improvements requested throughout the region marked by the blue circles. Green circles represent locations where pedestrian improvements were requested and red circles mark road crossing improvements requested. A yellow diamond represents a location where a traffic or road related improvement was needed.

Figure 2.8 Regional Wiki Map



The above map can be viewed at the following website link:

<https://pvpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/GeoForm/index.html?appid=bf67bd58f5014b8f93e4e01c9c87e543>

2.2.3.2 Spin the Wheel Game

Spin the wheel game was developed to engage visitors at the PVPC information table at public events. When the wheel stopped spinning at a random number, a player was given an equivalent number of Million Dollar bills of play money to spend on various bicycle and pedestrian transportation improvement projects. Then the player chose which bins to drop the bills into. The bins represented various project types (Figure 2.9). Some of the spending choices were: bike lanes, shared use paths, sidewalks, safe crosswalks, expand bikeshare, bike parking, slow down speeds, stop distracted



driving, maintenance, and other ideas. The activity proved fun for visitors of all ages (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.9 Budget Spending Categories (Game)

Image	Label	Description
	Maintenance	Rehabilitating current infrastructure, while maintaining good condition infrastructure.
	Bike Lanes	Adding and Improving Bike Lanes in areas with no Bike Lanes or Bike Lanes in need of improvements
	Sidewalks	Adding sidewalk connections or improving existing sidewalks accessibility and safety
	Shared-Use Paths (Bike Paths)	Adding Shared-Use Paths in areas in need, and improving current paths accessibility, safety, and connections
	Stop Distracted Driving	Improving driver awareness through enforcement and roadway additions (Signage, rumble strip, etc.)
	Safe Crosswalks	Adding crosswalks to areas in need of crosswalks and improving current crosswalks safety and accessibility
	Bike Racks Bike Parking	Providing Bike Racks/Bike Parking in areas of need, updating current Bike Parking accessibility
	Slow Traffic	Improving Traffic safety through slower traffic by speed limits, traffic calming (speed bumps, speed tables, etc.) and other safety measures
	Expand BikeShare	Adding Bike Share in areas with no existing bike share, improving current bike share infrastructure/system
	Your ideas?	Other Improvements not listed, provided by community members
	Spin the Wheel for Million Dollars	Grand Total (in bicycle and pedestrian improvements)



Figure 2.10 Spin for Million Game

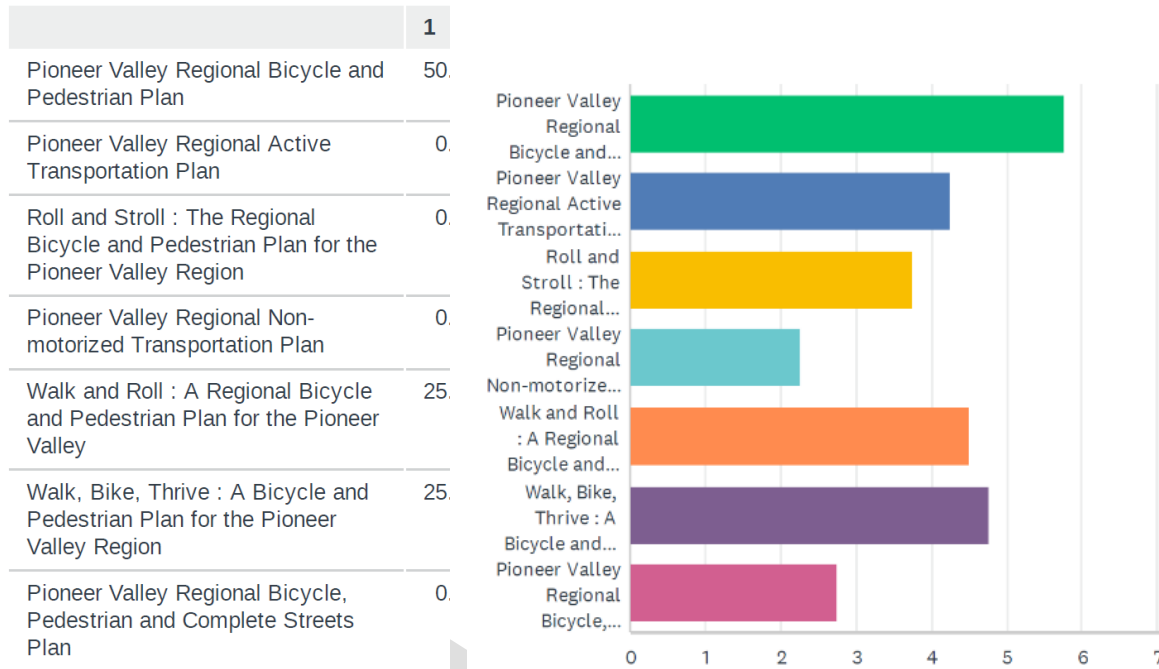


2.2.3.3 Surveys

A series of surveys were developed throughout the stages of the plan update process. The first survey included a report naming questionnaire. It was shared exclusively with the advisory group to help us identify the best name for this 2025 plan update. The most familiar traditional name received the most votes (Figure 2.11).



Figure 2.11 Rank Which Name do you prefer for the document



A second survey was designed to engage the public in the topic of active transportation barriers and needs using a series of questions for use at the in-person events or via the plan's online page. Copies of these surveys are included in the Appendix to this report. A series of 17 questions, mostly multiple-choice, inquired about the current walking and biking habits of participants and tried to identify matters that would encourage them to walk or bike more. At the end of the survey participants were presented with a couple of open ended questions about what and where improvements to the existing bicycling and walking infrastructure were needed.

Figure 2.12 Surveying the Walking and Biking Habits





2.2.3.3 Social Media

A key promotional tool of today's modern and technologically savvy public is social media. Staff worked with PVPC's Public Relations teams to post regular announcements about the plan using the agency's social media accounts on Bluesky, Facebook and Instagram. These included informational messages, invitations to public meetings, links to the interactive online map and surveys posted on the agency's website which included additional resources related to the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2025 Update. Visit the following links to view posts:

- Instagram - [@PVPCMA](#)
- Facebook - [PVPC MA](#)
- Bluesky - [@PVPCMA](#)

Figure 2.13 Outreach Events Promotional Social Media Posts

