

Arkansas Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This report was funded in part by the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. The views and opinions of the authors expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (Department) complies with all civil rights provisions of federal statutes and related authorities that prohibit discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Therefore, the Department does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, age, national origin, religion or disability, in the admission, access to and treatment in the Department's programs and activities, as well as the Department's hiring or employment practices. Complaints of alleged discrimination and inquiries regarding the Department's nondiscrimination policies may be directed to Joanna P. McFadden, Section Head – EEO/DBE (ADA/504/Title VI Coordinator), P. O. Box 2261, Little Rock, AR 72203, (501) 569-2298, (Voice/TTY 711), or the following email address: joanna.mcfadden@ahtd.ar.gov.

Free language assistance for the Limited English Proficient individuals is available upon request.

This notice is available from the ADA/504/Title VI Coordinator in large print, on audiotape and in Braille.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The quantified benefits of cycling and pedestrian activities and the positive impact of planning and investments are shown to provide citizens improved mobility, travel options, personal health, fitness, and furthermore deliver economic growth in tourism, benefits in livable communities, and reduced health care costs at the local, regional, and statewide level.

Nearly two-thirds of all Arkansans participate in outdoor recreation each year, generating \$10 billion in consumer spending. This is due in part to Arkansas' unique location and natural environment that allows road cycling, running, mountain biking, hiking, and many other activities.

Over the years, the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) and other state and local jurisdictions have increased emphasis on bicycle and pedestrian planning. AHTD adopted the very first bicycle and pedestrian plan in 1998. In 2005 the Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Policy was developed by AHTD to provide a framework for incorporating bicycle and pedestrian considerations into project development. Local communities are encouraged to adopt their own bicycle and pedestrian plans to address bicycle and pedestrian needs.

In 2012, the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) released its annual Bicycle Friendly States Ranking and Arkansas was at the bottom of the list. At that time, then-Governor Mike Beebe named members to the Governor's Bicycling Advisory Group (GBAG) and charged them to find ways to improve the state's ranking. The cooperative actions among the GBAG, AHTD, and Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism (ADPT) led to the update of this Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan.

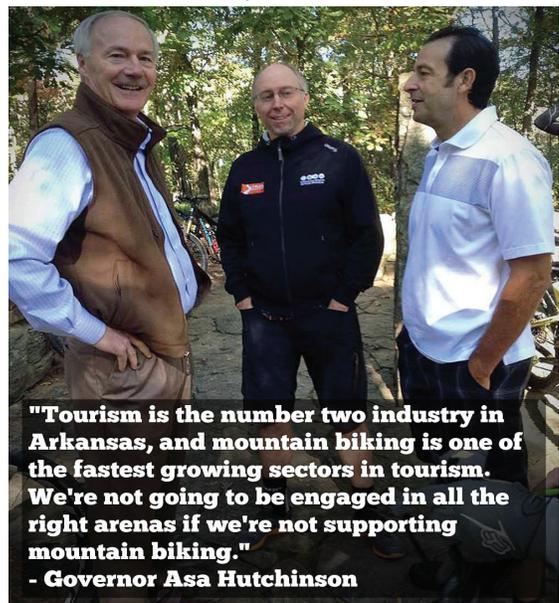
For nearly two years, representatives from the AHTD, ADPT, the Arkansas State Police,

the Arkansas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training, and the Arkansas Department of Health collaborated to learn the pedestrian and cycling needs in all corners of the state. Through engagement of a very active Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), additional representation was included from local cycling retail outlets, statewide and regional cycling and pedestrian representatives, metropolitan planning organizations, planning and economic development districts, the Arkansas Municipal League, and the Arkansas Public Transportation Coordinating Council.

In various regions of the state there are differing thoughts and influences on many topics including level of engagement, investment, and maturity of cycling and pedestrian activities.

After seven public meetings, 25 stakeholder meetings and nearly 1,000 survey responses we know the following:

- 88 percent of the respondents are employed.
- Nearly half of the respondents have a daily commute of less than five miles.
- Nine of ten have auto access and four of five commute to work by auto.



Likewise, nearly 80 percent of the respondents were considered casual or experienced riders. Another 14 percent limit their riding to neighborhood streets. The remaining six percent of the respondents reported that they do not bike at all.

For pedestrian activities, one of ten respondents said they walk to work regularly and 40 percent said they are comfortable walking more than three miles.

From the extensive stakeholder input it is obvious that Arkansas is a premier destination for mountain biking and on-road bicycle touring. Furthermore, many Arkansas residents desire to have livable and walkable communities.

To determine the different aspects related to regional needs and activities, the stakeholder involvement was conducted in four regions across the State. Regional activities included an inventory of local assets, existing and potential partnerships, areas of concern, and bicycle and pedestrian needs. There were also site visits conducted in each of the regions. The regional results are presented in Chapter 4 – Regional Reports.

The following topics were considered by the participants as the most important:

- Access to destinations and safe travel to urban destinations.
- Urban and suburban sidewalks.
- Cycling improvements on low and medium volume roadways.



- Acknowledgement of cycling and walking as legitimate modes of transportation.
- Safety education programs (motorists, cyclists, children).
- Surface improvements to rural roadways.

The TAC was instrumental in refining the results of the public engagement activities into a list of objectives, tasks, and responsible parties as listed below.

1	Enhance laws and policies, enforcement, and local empowerment to promote alternative transportation and increase safety.
2	Sustain and continue to improve a robust bicycle and pedestrian program in Arkansas.
3	Consider innovative or non-traditional funding sources.
4	Review of the bicycle and pedestrian accommodation guidelines for Arkansas highways.
5	Develop a Statewide Bikeway Network using a tiered system that coordinates and connects to the United States Bicycle Route Numbering System.
6	Research and develop marketing strategies to be used at the state, regional, and local levels.
7	Further integrate bicycle and pedestrian safety into the Toward Zero Deaths campaign.
8	Provide leadership and support for education and advocacy efforts that relate to the built environment.

Specific strategies which have been identified are listed with the entity most likely to affect a change.

AHTD:

- Developing a Statewide Bicycle Network, including the designation of US Bike Routes across the State.
- Reviewing and considering updating the Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Guidelines upon adoption of this plan.
- Analyzing bicycle and pedestrian crash data in urban areas and identifying countermeasures to be included in the Highway Safety Improvement Program.



Bicycling and walking improvements can help transform urban neighborhoods.

- Integrating bicycle and pedestrian training into on-going and routine staff training activities for planning, design, and maintenance practices.
 - Reviewing the guidelines for shoulder and center line rumble strips, on an as needed basis.
 - Identifying ways to improve communications with local cyclists regarding AHTD maintenance activities.
 - Developing an online suitability map accessible through the internet, including access for mobile devices.
 - Reviewing and updating the Arkansas Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan as needed.
- Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism:**
- Developing the Trans-America bicycle touring route through Arkansas.
 - Exploring the use of non-traditional funding sources at the federal, state, and local levels.
 - Investigating the development of a Local Bicycle and Pedestrian Assistance Program including potential funding mechanisms.
 - Developing an online suitability map accessible through the internet, including access for mobile devices.
 - Conducting a field review of all highway guide and recreational information signs in the vicinity of major mountain bicycling venues, trailheads, and shared-use paths to ensure appropriate signage is presented.
 - Publishing a study that uses examples from Arkansas to document and promote the economic and other benefits of cycling and trail development.
 - Developing bicycle hub communities to serve as gateways to bicycle touring regions and mountain biking areas.
 - Developing a coalition of businesses, foundations, and user group partners to educate about bicycle-based tourism and to coordinate marketing efforts.
 - Conducting a statewide assessment of rail corridors with low use, and abandoned and reverted corridors to determine which may have the most potential for development as shared use paths.
 - Conducting a statewide personal travel survey.
 - Surveying in-state and out-of-state participants in bicycle touring and mountain biking to determine needed improvements and enhancements.
 - Developing a music history and heritage-based cycling tour of the Arkansas Delta region.
 - Coordinating federal and state land managers to inventory trails, trail mileage, and trail amenities open to mountain bicycling.



Bike Lanes promote safety on city streets.

Arkansas Department of Health:

- Providing education and technical assistance at the local level for Complete Streets policies.
- Providing technical assistance to local communities to develop master pedestrian and bicycle plans.
- Implementing community mentoring programs regarding lessons learned, sample policies, infrastructure design, etc. through the Growing Healthy Community projects.
- Conducting walking or bicycling audits on an annual basis (as funding will allow).
- Continuing to support the Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention and their programs.
- Exploring innovative funding sources for local assistance.

Governor and Arkansas General Assembly:

- Reactivating the Arkansas Bikeways Commission, including a pedestrian component.
- Studying the state liability laws to increase motorists' liability/consequence when involved in crashes with pedestrians or cyclists.
- Modifying the school siting laws to make walking and cycling to school more feasible.
- Enacting legislation to require all new public schools to include shared-use paths or bikeways within the school property and appropriate access to ensure safe bike and pedestrian travel to the school.

Local Jurisdictions:

- Encouraging and providing technical support to communities interested in developing and adopting local bicycle and pedestrian plans.
- Encouraging municipal and county governments to develop Complete Street policies for their jurisdictions.
- Exploring innovative or non-traditional funding sources.

Arkansas State Police:

- Analyzing bicycle and pedestrian crash data in urban areas and identifying countermeasures.
- Creating a multi-media safety education campaign.

As communities become more densely developed and more interconnected, and as travelers' desires change to other modes, there is a need to reassess bicycle and pedestrian needs in Arkansas.

During the development of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, Arkansas' LAB ranking improved to 36th in 2015. For that trend to continue, there are more improvements to be made.

These efforts and those attributed to other agencies and jurisdictions will be undertaken as staff and funds become available.



Arkansas
THE NATURAL STATE

