

5. Pedestrian System

Accomplishments Over the Past Five Years

In the past several years, the response to addressing pedestrian issues and improving pedestrian facilities has been positive. Utility agencies are aware of the sidewalk/utility pole conflict and efforts have been made to rectify existing problems as well as to prevent these conflicts in new construction projects. New curb ramps have been installed throughout the area, and are now an integral part of sidewalk construction. Some construction projects (which include accessible sidewalks) that have recently been completed are shown in Figure 5.1.

Although the response has been positive, the issues remain. There is still much work to be accomplished, and it will take several more years of concentrated effort before we can experience a pedestrian facilities system that is safe, accessible, and continuous. These issues have developed over a long period of time, and will take a reasonable amount of time to address. However, the effort continues. Construction projects (which include accessible sidewalks) that have recently been constructed or are underway or funded are shown in the map in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.1 Implemented projects in the San Antonio-Bexar County region



Background

There is a growing awareness and momentum toward improving pedestrian facilities, and public officials are responding to this need. This awareness began to develop in the early 1990s upon passage into law of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Roadway construction projects (capacity projects and rehabilitation projects) within the Urbanized Area normally include accessible pedestrian facilities. As this momentum continues and is extended, we are closer to a workable pedestrian facilities system that will accommodate pedestrian mobility needs.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives provide for a vision of an accessible pedestrian facilities system that is safe, continuous, convenient, attractive, and affordable:

Goal 1 Provide pedestrian facilities that are safe for general pedestrian travel and for extraordinary travel circumstances

Objective 1.1 Provide pedestrian facilities separate from roadways at safe distances from curbs and improve existing facilities to enhance safety

Objective 1.2 Promote a high level of pedestrian confidence by furnishing security features such as lighting

Objective 1.3 Ensure safe and accessible pedestrian crosswalks in all parts of the area, particularly in areas with high volumes of pedestrian traffic, such as schools, the downtown area, and the medical center area

Objective 1.4 Ensure safe pedestrian crossings over railroad tracks by providing accessible, well designed and constructed walkways with adequate warning systems to allow pedestrians ample time to cross without the fear of getting a foot or the wheel of a wheelchair caught between the walkway facilities and the tracks

Objective 1.5 Expand the local Safe Routes to School Program

Goal 2 Unite parts of the pedestrian facilities system into a whole, workable system by completing system gaps, providing linkages to activity centers, and connecting with other modes of travel

- Objective 2.1** Complete sidewalk gaps
 - Objective 2.2** Replace substandard or deteriorated sidewalks
 - Objective 2.3** Promote sidewalk continuity within and between neighborhoods and activity centers
 - Objective 2.4** Encourage activity centers to provide dedicated, safe pedestrianways across parking lots and open areas, connecting with the public walkway system.
- Goal 3** Increase pedestrian access to, and around, intermodal facilities by providing new linkages and improving existing connections
- Objective 3.1** Extend pedestrian facilities to serve transit stops and transfer facilities
 - Objective 3.2** Make pedestrian facilities integral elements of existing and future park and rides and other transit stations for large volumes of pedestrian traffic
 - Objective 3.3** Encourage public and commercial parking operators to provide dedicated, safe pedestrianways that connect with the public walkway system
- Goal 4** Employ accessible, barrier-free, state-of-the-art design for all new and replacement pedestrian facilities
- Objective 4.1** Function should be the fundamental guideline in designing pedestrian facilities
 - Objective 4.2** Acquire sufficient right-of-way clear of utility conflict and design pedestrian facilities with adequate capacity to accommodate anticipated traffic
 - Objective 4.3** Blend pedestrian facility design with area type and natural environment
 - Objective 4.4** Provide for landscaping and aesthetics as part of the overall facility design

Goal 5 Effectively utilize available resources to provide for basic pedestrian mobility and accessibility needs before providing enrichments.

Objective 5.1 Develop regional strategies and guidelines for expenditure of resources on capital improvements to optimize the available funding

Objective 5.2 Encourage area governments to adopt effective preventive maintenance programs in extending the life of existing pedestrian facilities

Objective 5.3 Explore public-private partnership possibilities in financing new and replacement pedestrian facilities

Existing Pedestrian System

The existing pedestrian system is composed of areas with new sidewalks, areas with very old sidewalks and areas with no sidewalks. There is evidence of active pedestrian traffic in all parts of the urbanized area, as worn pathways can be seen where there are no sidewalks. Pedestrians using wheelchairs do not have adequate access to the system and often must use the street for mobility because of a lack of sidewalks, curb ramps, substandard walkways, or obstacles in walkways. The greatest needs are safety, connectivity, and access to transit stops.

The Pedestrian Amenities Plan (September 1997) revealed that existing pedestrian facilities are incomplete, inadequate, and inaccessible. Further, the existing system did not adequately link neighborhoods with public transit or activity centers. The system had many gaps, too narrow or poor condition sidewalks, obstacles such as utility poles and mailboxes and a general lack of curb ramps connecting to sidewalks. Based on a comprehensive inventory of pedestrian facilities adjacent to functionally classified roadways within the MPO study area, these findings confirmed concerns that citizens have continually expressed over the past several years.

Pedestrian Needs and Issues

An incomplete and inaccessible system presents a multitude of problems for pedestrians. There is an extensive need to connect existing pedestrian facilities into an integrated transportation system: linking neighborhoods with activity centers and linking neighborhoods and activity centers with transportation modes. The condition of existing facilities must also be considered, as navigability and safety are jeopardized on a facility with a rough or broken surface.

As previously indicated, the findings from the Pedestrian Amenities Plan were based on a comprehensive inventory of pedestrian facilities adjacent to functionally classified roadways. The majority of roads within the MPO study area are not functionally classified; leaving a large gap in the system that was not inventoried.

Safety, connectivity and access to transit stops are paramount needs and there are also needs in improved design of pedestrian facilities, particularly with regard to ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards. An attractive and convenient system will contribute to increased usage of pedestrian facilities. Pedestrian confidence will increase on facilities that appear safe, secure, and well maintained.

The key to pedestrian safety is prevention of accidents which means providing dedicated pedestrian facilities off of roadways and providing safe zones such as roadway medians. The challenge is in providing pedestrian facilities that are safe for normal pedestrian travel and for school age children. Safety considerations include: distance from curb, signage, drainage, cross slope, curb ramp location and condition, speed limits, crosswalk markings, signals, lighting, and education of the traveling public.

The issue of connectivity refers to the concept of connecting parts of the pedestrian facilities system into a whole, workable system. This can be accomplished by providing linkages to other modes of travel, making extensions to activity centers, and completing gaps along the system.

Improved pedestrian access to transit stops also serves mobility-impaired pedestrians. As more low-floor buses are put into service, access to transit stops must be improved to allow pedestrians using wheelchairs or other mobility assistance equipment to access the transit stops. This translates to providing sidewalks and curb ramps leading up to and along transit routes.

Programs

Pedestrian Mobility Task Force

The Pedestrian Mobility Task Force (PMTF) monitors and evaluates conditions and makes recommendations to the Transportation Policy Board and Technical Advisory Committee on matters applicable to pedestrian mobility and accessibility. The PMTF can initiate pedestrian facilities projects and submit requests to the appropriate entities to be considered as candidate projects for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The PMTF is comprised of representatives from neighborhood and community organizations geographic distribution, special interest groups, public agency representatives and other representatives as deemed appropriate. The PMTF should have the flexibility to assume new functions to address other surface transportation accessibility issues. Integration of the PMTF and the MPO's Bicycle Mobility Task Force (BMTF) would facilitate addressing alternative transportation issues and opportunities.

Hike and Bike for Health Month

As traffic congestion and air quality issues began to escalate so did the awareness for the need for alternatives to the automobile, for at least some trips. The PMTF and the BMTF work with other agencies and groups in the community to produce the very successful annual Hike and Bike for Health Month. Hike and Bike for Health Month activities help promote both alternative transportation modes and healthier lifestyles.

Safe Routes to School

The PMTF is in the process of expanding the local safe routes to school program in the spirit and intent of the Texas Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School Program. Several pilot schools have been selected for walkability studies, and are being coordinated with the applicable school districts. Next steps include more formalization of the program and exploring financing alternatives.

Pedestrian Facilities Management System

The foundation of the Pedestrian Facilities Management System is a database which contains results from the comprehensive inventory conducted as part of the Pedestrian Amenities Plan study process. The current database contains 25 fields and 12,000 records of block-by-block information pertaining to pedestrian facilities. Each record represents a street segment (approximately one block) of information on both sides of the roadway. One large gap in this system is that it only contains pedestrian facilities information along functionally classified roadways. The database could also be expanded to include inventory data along local roads.

Transportation Improvement Program

Project selection guidelines for Transportation Improvement Program pedestrian facilities projects, shown in Table 5.1, are used by the MPO's Technical Advisory Committee in the technical review of candidate projects to be recommended to the MPO Transportation Policy Board. The TAC will decide upon the specific technical point ranges for the criteria and may delegate authority to the PMTF to perform the technical review.

**Table 5.1 Transportation Improvement Program
Project Selection Guidelines**

Factor	%	Measurement
Safety	25	Measured in: (1) vehicle accidents per vehicle miles of travel, and (2) number of daily school bus trips along roadway segment (school bus must make passenger stops in the roadway segment; school service needs to include VIA contract school service with San Antonio Independent School District
Connectivity	20	Measured in number of activity centers (schools, community centers, residential areas, commercial / retail areas) "served."
Intermodal	20	Measured in number of VIA bus trips traveling on or perpendicular to the roadway segment; bus must make stops serving the segment.
Functionality	20	Measurement is subjective; can be done by committee consensus. Consideration is given to design (width, slope, etc.), pavement condition, and gap completion.
Cost	10	Measured in cost per current (most recent data available) Vehicle Miles of Travel
Volume - 2030	5	Measured in projected vehicles per lane per day.
Total	100	