Section 3: Community Response

Highlighted in this section is the concurrence among the general community, the *Plan* Steering Committee, and the MTPO members that the existing bicycling conditions within Alachua County do not fully meet the needs of its residents or visitors. Also featured in this section are the planning initiatives currently undertaken toward improving bicycling in Alachua County as well as the bicycle-related activities of adjacent and regional jurisdictions.

3.1 Public Input

Public input and participation in this study is important for several reasons; first, to identify the locations of potential off-road trail corridors; second, to get an indication of the desired Bicycle Quality of Service target standard and preferred Goals ranking; and third, to garner public input (votes) as to where bicycle facilities are desired. Toward these ends, two rounds of community workshops were held, the first in June of 2000 and the second in April 2001. The following paragraphs document the purpose and results of these workshops.

The Steering Committee's insights were valuable in helping shape the Master Plan.

1st Public Workshop

At the initial round of workshops, the *Plan's* purpose was described, as was the purpose of the workshops. There were three goals of the initial workshop. The first was to have participants mark the locations of potential off-road trail corridors on maps provided to them. The second was to obtain an indication of the public's preferred ranking of importance of the *Plan's* four draft Goals. The third was to vote on a minimum Bicycle QOS standard. The results of the network-wide Bicycle QOS (bicycling conditions) evaluation were also presented at this round of workshops.

In order to identify potential off-road trails, attendees were each given maps of Alachua County and were asked to mark on the maps where they would like to see off-road trails constructed. The maps depicted the study road network, the background street network, schools, parks, roads with existing bike lanes or shoulders, trails, and roads achieving or exceeding the proposed minimum Bicycle QOS standard. The trail corridors identified on the public workshop participants' maps was combined into one map. This map was then circulated to various agencies and organizations with potential authority over the identified trail right-of-ways. These agencies and organizations were asked to determine whether or not the trail corridors were on right-of-ways that would allow the construction of a trail. The final (potential) trails map was prepared based on the input from these agencies and organizations. The total mileage of trails is 298.5 miles. The potential trails network, pursuant to the *Plan's* Steering Committee, has been stratified into two classifications: urban and rural – though for prioritization purposes, there is only one trail network. Urban trails (108.7 miles) are those that lie within the MTPO planning boundary; all other trails are classified as rural trails (189.8 miles).

Workshop participants were also asked to rank the draft Goals for the *Alachua Countywide Bicycle Master Plan.* Each attendee was given a questionnaire that allowed them to rank, in order of importance, the four Goal categories that had been established by the *Plan's* Steering Committee (see Appendix "A" for questionnaire). The questionnaire also provided the participants with the opportunity to specify additional goals. The public responses, in addition to the Plan's Steering Committee input were used to establish the ranking of the Plan's goals as stated in Section 1 .

The establishment of a minimum roadway Bicycle QOS standard (or standards) is an essential component of this *Plan.* The attendees were provided with a contingent valuation questionnaire that asked them to vote for a minimum standard. The questionnaire described the existing average countywide bicycle quality of service ("C"). The possible responses were broken into five categories ("A" to "F"), with the associated generalized cost and time required to meet the quality of service target (see Appendix "A" for survey). Participants were also provided with pictures that depicted the different bicycling conditions for each QOS grade to help participants understand the differences between each grade. The public input, along with direction from the Steering Committee, led to the establishment of a target Bicycle QOS standard of "B" for non-state roads and "C" for state roads.

2nd Public Workshop

The principal purpose of the second round of workshops was to allow participants to vote for both on-road and off-road study network segments on which they would like to see bicycle facilities constructed. The results of the *Latent Demand* assessment, bicycle crash analysis, and (draft) network prioritization were also presented.

The attendees were each given maps of the existing and potential bicycle network. The maps depicted the study road network, potential trails, the background street network, schools, parks, roads with existing bike lanes or shoulders, trails, roads with Bicycle QOS "A", "B", and "C", and roads for which bicycle improvements are programmed. Included with each map were ten self-adhesive dots. Participants placed a dot on each network segment that they desired a bicycle facility, which then represented a "vote" for having a bicycle facility built on that network segment. The tallied votes (see Table 6) were then used to help further refine the draft prioritization. Although these votes do constitute one of the prioritization criteria, this criterion is not a deciding one. Rather, it provides an indication or confirmation of the technical work, i.e., the bicycling conditions evaluation and the assessment of potential bicycle travel demand. The prioritization process discussed in Section 4 describes how these votes are utilized in the ranking of road segments for bicycle retrofit construction. The public participation is further documented in Appendix "A" at the end of this *Plan*.

Table 6 Summary of Public Workshop Votes

Facility Type	Number of Votes
On-Road	123
Trails	189
Total Votes	312

3.2 Planning Initiatives

The development of the *Alachua Countywide Bicycle Master Plan* coincides with a number of other planning activities that are improving conditions for bicycling within Alachua County. The activities and recommendations of this *Master Plan* study are integrated with these other planning initiatives as much as possible. The discussion below is a summary of these initiatives.

On-Road Facilities

The FDOT, Alachua County, the City of Gainesville, and the University of Florida each have planning initiatives in place to expand the on-road network. A brief description of each of these entity's initiatives follows.

The Florida Department of Transportation – has reconstructed many of their roadways to include paved shoulders. The FDOT now provides accommodations for bicyclists on all state roads. The FDOT has completed improvements to US 441 and is currently reconstructing State Road 20 from Gainesville to Hawthorne to include paved shoulders. Upcoming programmed projects will add bicycle lanes to portions of Main Street and SW 2nd Avenue. Main Street is an important corridor for serving bicycle and pedestrian travel. The Main Street corridor ranks as a high priority corridor according to this *Plan* due to it's high potential to serve bicycle travel (high "latent" demand) and the poor conditions it currently provides for bicycling.

Alachua County – will be constructing paved shoulders on 122nd Street from SR 26 (Newberry Road) to SR 24 (Archer Road). In cooperation with the FDOT, paved shoulders will also be added to CR 241.

The City of Gainesville – has recently constructed bicycle facilities on SW 12th Street and NW 38th Street. In addition, the City has also recently completed the construction of bike lanes on NE 9th Street, NW 55th Street, and SE 8th Avenue. The City is currently retrofitting several other roadways with bicycle facilities.

The University of Florida – has constructed bike lanes on Hull Road, Mowry Road, and Museum Road and is presently retrofitting a number of other roadways within the main campus to include bike lanes. These are just a few examples of the various initiatives that are being undertaken within the community to improve conditions for bicyclists.

Off-Road Trails

Off-road trails are an integral part of developing a comprehensive bicycle network throughout Alachua County. Off-road trails offer an excellent opportunity to give bicyclists the chance to ride without constant concern over motor vehicle traffic. Off-road trails are excellent places for children to learn to ride, and can offer them an alternate route to destinations such as parks and schools. The trail initiatives highlighted below will help expand these opportunities.

The 6th Street Rail -Trail Corridor is an important off-road trail project that is currently being designed and is partially funded, and it also ranks very high in terms of "latent" bicycle demand. This trail has the potential to serve both recreation and utilitarian bicycle riding. A number of residents indicated their interest in this (and other) trails during the public workshops. Furthermore, Alachua County has initiated an off-road trail project along the Archer Road Corridor that will run from SW 75th/Tower Road to SW 88th Street. This trail would be a ten-foot paved facility serving both bicyclists and pedestrians. The

SW 23rd Terrace Trail has been identified in the *Long Range Transportaion Plan*, and has been earmarked to receive a portion of the $4.2 million dollars in funding projected to be available through the year 2020.

Several of the potential trails in the study network could connect with existing trails in and around Lochloosa Lake and Paynes Prairie State Preserve. Haile Plantation, a large neo-traditional community in Alachua County, has developed some trails within the community. There are a number of potential trail corridors identified in this *Plan* (e.g. Archer Road Corridor Trail and the Lake Kanapaha Trails) that could eventually tie into the trails within Haile Plantation. In addition, the City of Gainesville is actively working with neighborhoods throughout the City to identify opportunities for interconnecting trails that would provide bicyclists and pedestrians with the ability to access adjacent neighborhoods, schools, and shopping centers.

The UF Campus Master Plan emphasizes bicycling for student transportation.

The University of Florida Campus Master Plan

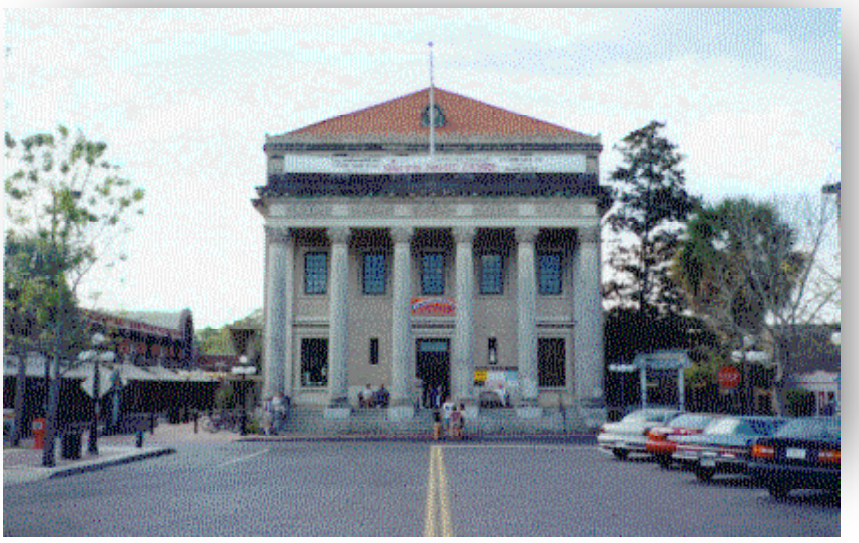
The University of Florida has developed a *Campus Master Plan* that includes bicycle improvements. The *UF Master Plan* proposes the construction of a number of on-road and off-road bicycle facilities throughout the main campus area. Additionally, over the last two years, a number of roadways have been retrofitted with bike lanes. Connectivity with the existing and fu-

ture bicycle network within the City of Gainesville and Alachua County is an important feature of the *Campus Master Plan*. The construction of bicycle facilities on the UF Campus will further enhance the overall bicycle network within the County.

Gainesville Metropolitan Area 2020 Transportation Plan

The *Gainesville Metropolitan Area 2020 Transportation Plan* focuses on developing a multi-modal transportation system to complement the preferred land use scenario. The *2020 Plan* establishes a cost-feasible plan for new roadway construction and retrofit construction of existing roadways. Bicycle related improvements are a key component of the *2020 Plan.*

Gainesville Urbanized Area MTPO Urban Design Policy Manual



The City of Gainseville Comprehensive Plan integrates provisions, policies, and guidelines for the accommodation of bicyclists.

Originally published in 1995, this manual guides the construction of bicycle accommodations on all arterials and major collectors within the MTPO boundary. The *Manual* provides guidelines and standards on the width of travel lanes and bicycle facilities. The *Manual* specifies requirements for open shouldered roads and roads with curbs and gutters, provides recommendations for the provision of bicycle ac-

commodations in subdivisions and in negotiated development orders. Bicycle parking facilities and their location and bicycle detection devices at signalized intersections are also included in the *Manual*. In keeping with the *2020 Plan,* a strong emphasis is placed on providing accommodations for the bike, pedestrian, and transit modes and integrating these modes into the planning and development process.

City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan

The Transportation Mobility Element of the City of Gainesville's Comprehensive Plan is currently being revised to integrate provisions, policies, and guidelines for the accommodation of bicyclists within the City. Providing bicycle connections between adjacent land uses and neighborhoods is a major focus in the Transportation Mobility Element. Providing on-road and off-road bicycle accommodations throughout the City is the primary goal of the bicycle section of the City's *Comprehensive Plan*. Increasing bicyclists' safety through improving existing conditions and education, along with providing bicycle parking facilities and bicycle detection devices at signalized intersections are also priorities of the bicycle section of the *Plan*.

Alachua County Comprehensive Plan

The Transportation Element of Alachua County's Comprehensive Plan is in the process of being revised to integrate provisions, policies, and guidelines for the accommodation of bicyclists within the County. The County may require, at its discretion, that new developments meet the Bicycle QOS standards that are being adopted in this *Plan*. The Element focuses on treating all modes equally within a roadway cross-section. Integrating bicycle facility connections with the City of Gainesville is also an important objective of the Element. Coordination with the City of Gainesville to provide a network of bicycle facilities, through

expansion of the Transportation Concurrency Exception Area, the enactment of Multi-modal Transportation Districts, and Neo-Traditional developments, are all features of the element that will expand the existing bicycle network within the County.

Safety Programs

There are several safety program projects that will soon be started to increase safety for bicyclists and pedestrians along a number of roadways within the Gainesville Metropolitan Area. One of the anticipated studies concerns the US 441 corridor that runs through Paynes Prairie. Along with the US 441 study, safety projects are also anticipated for University Ave/SR 26/26A corridor.

There are also several safety and bicycle education programs that currently exist. The Florida Bicyclist Training Program was established in 1984 to educate elementary and middle school children on bicycle safety. The University of Florida Police Department's Bicycle Safety Education Program is designed to promote a greater awareness of the duties and responsibilities associated with the operation of bicycles in the greater campus traffic mix. The goal of the program is to provide students, faculty, and staff of the university community with a desirable combination of education, encouragement, enforcement and facilities necessary to gain voluntary acceptance and compliance with bicycle safety standards and the law.

City of Gainesville Bicycle/Pedestrian Program

The City of Gainesville was one of the first communities to establish a local Bicycle/Pedestrian Program in 1983. The Program has been staffed by a full-time coordinator for nearly all of its nineteen year history. Currently, the Program is staffed with two employees – a full time bicycle/pedestrian program assistant who manages the

education and promotion activities of the program; and a transportation planning analyst who manages project design and development activities. The City's Bicycle/Pedestrian Program has been aided by the support and input of a citizen advisory board that was first established by the City in 1968. This early advisory board has evolved into a Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board providing recommendations to the City of Gainesville Commission, Board of Alachua County Commissioners, and the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization. The City's Bicycle/Pedestrian Program has been maintained by the City of Gainesville with periodic supplemental funding from various safety and energy grants from the State of Florida. Throughout the years, the City of Gainesville Bicycle/Pedestrian Program has encouraged bicycling through development of on-road and off-road networks, bicycle supportive policies, bicycle and pedestrian facility maps, community-wide special events, bicycle safety rodeos, bike/walk-to-work/school promotions, bicycle safety curriculum and training, newsletters, public safety advertising campaigns, and numerous other activities.

3.3 Activities of Adjacent / Regional Jurisdictions

Alachua County is in the geographic center of the north Florida region. Many of the agencies and communities in the north Florida region, (in conjunction with the Water Management Districts, FDOT and various utility companies) have developed or plan on developing an extensive network of regional trails. Due to its central location, Alachua County could serve as a nexus for connecting the existing and future regional trails in north Florida. Many of the potential trails identified in this *Plan* are located in the more rural parts of Alachua County and have the potential to connect to the trail networks that exist in adjacent counties. Furthermore, connection to the regional trails net-

work has been identified as important to the promotion of eco-tourism within Alachua County and North Florida.

Existing trails in the North Florida Region include the Nature Coast Greenway, Jacksonville-Baldwin Trail, Bell Trail, Cross Florida Greenway, and the Withlacoochee Trail. Other trails that are planned or under consideration include connections between the City of High Springs and Ichetucknee, Palatka and Starke, and numerous extensions of existing trails. All of these trails are located within a reasonable bicycling distance of Alachua County and the City of Gainesville. This Plan identifies general trail corridors that could be developed into trails that place Gainesville in the center of a hub of regional trails. Map 3 at the end of this section displays these trails in the context of existing and planned regional trails.