Chapter 3
Education

- **Education**
Encouragement
Enforcement
Engineering & Facilities
Evaluation & Planning

Photo above: A woman and child ride on the road in Blackwater.

Virginia Beach currently does not have an organized, wide-reaching program for bike education, nor any similar program for pedestrians. Other cities such as Raleigh, NC and Alexandria, VA have successful bicycle and pedestrian education practices that could be adapted and implemented in Virginia Beach.

Five new implementation strategies are recommended for the long term and through various means to educate Virginia Beach residents about various aspects of bikeways and trails including: bicycling and pedestrian etiquette and practices; learning resources; education practices; as well as the identification of need for a bicycle-pedestrian ambassador.

The types of facilities used by bicyclists and pedestrians are as varied as the people who use them. On-road bike facilities require cooperation between motorists and cyclists. Off-road multi-use trails are designed for use by in-line skaters, runners, cyclists, and wheelchairs going in both directions at a wide range of speeds and experience levels. Pedestrians cross streets at intersections that are sometimes signed and signaled, but are often not. Education is a vital component of any bikeways and trails system, because it allows all users to share roads and trails safely and effectively.

Through the public input process, many citizens commented about traffic safety and the rules of the road. A variety of educational tools and programs are essential to reach out to our citizens and visitors of all ages and abilities. Following are recommendations that address primary public concerns.

Photo courtesy of Bikes Belong

Goals and Implementation Tasks

Goal 3: Motorists, cyclists, pedestrians and other road users will know and abide by the rules of the road.

A TOP-PRIORITY GOAL

Many motorists are unaware of state and local traffic laws about bicyclists and pedestrians, and they do not know how to share the road. Likewise, many cyclists and pedestrians do not know proper safety skills for sharing the road. Finally, many visitors to Virginia Beach do not know local bike rules and laws. Educating the community about traffic skills and road rules will increase the safety of all users.

Goal 3.1: City government will partner with others to provide community education programs about sharing the road.

In general, the Department of Parks & Recreation will lead this effort, but other departments could participate or take the lead for various efforts.

Task 3.1.1: Create a Bikeways and Trails Ambassador Program

The Ambassadors initiate dialogue with community members to identify and address local transportation safety concerns, give demonstrations to children, teens, and adults about safe bicycling practices, and offer support at community bike and safety events. Services provided include helmet fittings, bicycle safety checks, and distribution of safety materials and bikeways & trails maps. This program should be led by LCI-trained members of the community. The BTAC should initiate the program. They may volunteer to be ambassadors and recruit members of the community to do the same. As the program is established, funding could be secured to pay for two ambassadors for the summer season.

Best Practices: Toronto, ON, Cycling Ambassadors program; Chicago, IL, Bicycling Ambassadors program; Philadelphia, PA, Bicycle Ambassadors program; Raleigh, NC, Bicycle Ambassador program.

Task 3.1.2: Educate the community with programs such as those offered by the League of American Bicyclists .

The League of American Bicyclists (LAB) has a bike education program with a variety of courses and certifications that are recommended for the public. In addition, attending these courses could help key City staff to have a better understanding of user factors in the planning, design and management of bike-ped facilities, roadways, and site development.

- "Traffic Skills 101" is about the basics of safe, legal operation of a bike both on-road and off-road. The course covers bike maintenance, riding skills and how to avoid crashes. It is recommended for adults and children over fourteen years old.

- "Traffic Skills 201" is for cyclists with more advanced skills and an understanding of vehicular cycling.

- "Motorist Education" is a three-hour session that could be added to a Driver's Education curriculum. Targeted towards motorists, this course

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Goals describe desirable end results or conditions towards which we will strive, and *Tasks* describe the actions that will help us achieve those goals.

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public comments:

["Bikeways – Excellent base network exists. Next steps should be neighborhood clinics to get onto that network."]

["Bike rental companies need education for foreign workers who don't necessarily know the local rules of the road."]

["Distribute the "Sharing the Road in VA" brochure to realtors, welcome wagon, etc. for new residents."]

["It's not clear whether bikes should use sidewalk or not. A lot of time they have to out of necessity, but that doesn't work well for pedestrians."]

["Physical education in schools should include bike programs."]

focuses on bicycle positioning, hand signals, principles of right-of-way, and right and left turn problems.

- "Bicycle Skills 123" is designed for businesses that sell and/or rent bicycles. This course trains owners and employees to encourage safe cycling with short, entertaining presentations.

Goal 3.2: Children will learn bike and pedestrian safety at school.

School-aged children are often too young to drive or do not have access to a car. Cycling and pedestrian safety skills could go a long way to increase the mobility and health of kids in Virginia Beach.

Task 3.2.1: Work with public and private schools to teach bike and pedestrian safety in the Physical Education (P.E.) curriculum.
"Bike Smart" is a curriculum that is used as the education arm of the Safe Routes to School program in Virginia, focusing on pedestrian and bicyclists safety skills for children. Teachers can get continuing education credits for the Bike Smart Basics course through the Virginia Department of Education. All instructors are Bike Smart or LAB certified.

Task 3.2.2: Work with public and private educators to integrate "Share -the-Road" material into driver education materials.
Motorists and bicyclists are legally allowed to use the same streets, and there is a lack of information on how to do so. VDOT has developed a "Sharing the Road in Virginia" brochure to communicate traffic safety skills and laws in the Commonwealth. Distribute these brochures to targeted populations such as new residents and driver's education students through the Department of Motor Vehicle driver education curriculum.

Goal 3.3: City government will partner with others to provide community-wide print and other media about sharing the road.

Task 3.3.1: Announce bikeways and trails safety tips and laws through public service announcements.
An affordable method to educate the community is through public service announcements. The BTAC and City of Virginia Beach Bikeways and Trails Planner could work with the City's Media and Communications Network to communicate basic bicycle and pedestrian safety tips. Some suggestions from the public input process were to market using lights at night, wear a helmet, yield to pedestrians, and advertise that bicycles are allowed to use the road.

Task 3.3.2: Produce and Distribute Education Materials.
Pamphlets, give-aways, special events, and the internet are effective tools to educate those who do not have the time or interest to take a class. Sometimes it will be appropriate to distribute materials from VDOT or other agencies, but it is also important to consider the unique needs of Virginia Beach and create our own materials.

Photo courtesy of Bikes Belong

Task 3.3.3: Keep the City's Bikeways and Trails web presence current.
The Bikeways and Trails web site should include information about facilities, traffic, and path safety essentials, and rules of the road. Include easy-to-reference and accessible sections of the Bikeways and Trails Plan for easy access to designers, engineers, and planners. Advertise all public meetings and new information related to bikeways and trails on the City's web-based and media resources pages.

Task 3.3.4: Review the 2010 Bikeways and Trails Plan and identify the need for new or updated publications and materials.
Coordinate with the City's Media and Communications Network to design and distribute materials that meet the education objectives of the 2010 Bikeways and Trails Plan. Consider partnering with a sponsor to help pay for related costs.

Task 3.3.5: Integrate bicycle safety illustrations on the revised City-wide bikeways and trails map.
The map is discussed in the "Encouragement", Section 4.

public comments:

["There is a lack of understanding on behalf of the motorists and cyclists of the laws governing the roads. More emphasis should be paid to these laws and rules when taking the driver's test at DMV."]

["Distribute the "Sharing the Road in VA" brochure to realtors, welcome wagon, etc.]

Policies and Priorities

This section summarizes the Policies & Priorities that flow from the Goals and Tasks described in this chapter. The Top Priorities are listed together in the Executive Summary.

Policies

No specific new City-wide policies are needed or recommended to implement the Goals and Tasks of this chapter; however, each of the three goals in this chapter need partnerships with others.

- "Goal 3.1: City government will _partner with others_ to provide community education programs about sharing the road." These others could include bike clubs, bike shops, individual certified instructors, and civic organizations.

- "Goal 3.2: Children will learn bike and pedestrian safety _at school_." The implementation tasks refer to working with both public and private schools.

- "Goal 3.3: City government will _partner with others_ to provide community-wide print and other media about sharing the road." The same partners in Goal 3.1 might be suitable partners for this goal, too, as well as other private businesses and organizations that support biking and walking for a variety of reasons.

One policy is needed or recommended that must be addressed at the state level. Virginia Beach's legislative team should work with other localities and stakeholder groups to advocate state policies along these lines.

- Driver education should include how to share the road with non-motorized users.

Priorities

This chapter contains one Top-Priority Goal:

- "Goal 3: Motorists, cyclists, pedestrians and other road users will know and abide by the rules of the road."

Goal 3 is an over-arching goal which encompasses each of the other goals within the chapter.