

Regional Trail & Bikeway
Systems Plan
2006

SECTION VI
GAP ANALYSIS



Proud Past, Promising Future

SECTION VI. GAP ANALYSIS

The Clark County Trail and Bikeway Systems Plan seeks to develop a seamless trail and bikeway system throughout the region providing essential recreation and regional transportation amenities benefiting the community today and generations to come. This well defined system will link public facilities, housing, retail, and employment centers extending throughout the county and into the larger metropolitan region. Implementation of this plan will reap enormous economic health benefits by reducing health care costs and infrastructure costs while providing environmental and social benefits for all residents.

Early in the planning process, a thorough review of the developed and planned trail and bikeway facilities was performed. This preliminary review, in combination with public input and other planning studies, became the foundation for the formal trail and bikeway gap analysis. The completed gap analysis will highlight the deficiencies in the existing system and help guide the planning and funding for future improvements.

The gap analysis for the Clark County System can be divided into the following categories:

Trail System Plans

A review of the trail corridors, routes, and projects identified during previous planning studies that have not been constructed where alternative routes have been developed. The focus of this analysis included review of the county's 1992 plan and the recently completed Vancouver Walking and Bicycle Master Plan.



Public Involvement

Throughout the current trails plan update, the public and user groups were engaged in a series of public open houses, stakeholder meetings and a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). This public involvement provided information on existing trails currently not mapped, highly desired trail linkages to be developed, and insight on frequency and utilization of the current system. Interaction with the trail users provided the planning team with first-hand input on system deficiencies.



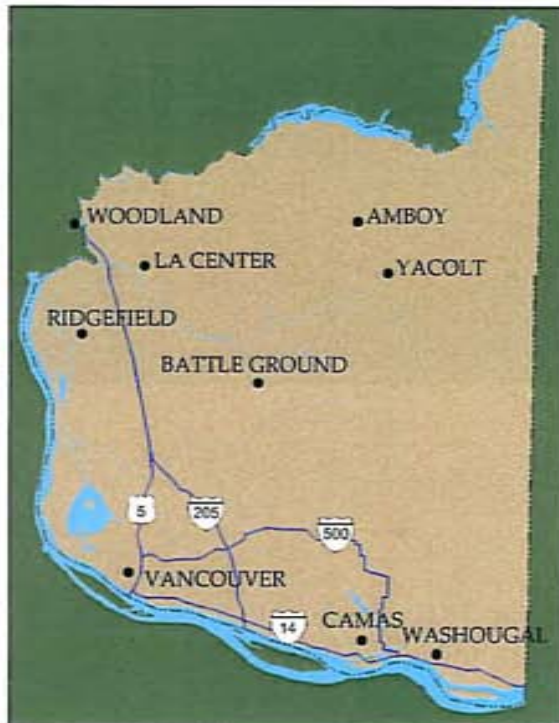
Connectivity and Accessibility

The existing system was analyzed for the level of connectivity between trails and bikeways *AND* likely destinations served. Locations evaluated include public facilities, open space, existing trails, schools, recreation facilities, housing, commercial nodes, employment centers, etc. For both recreational trail and alternative transportation users, corridors that were well connected to multiple facilities were more desirable. Likewise, trails and bikeways that were located close to places of employment and neighborhoods were more likely to be used and utilized more frequently.



Regional Network

Linking Clark County's Trail and bikeway Plan to the larger regional network will provide higher benefit for local communities and neighbors within the Portland metropolitan area. Similarly, the current and future planning efforts of the county's smaller cities and towns must be accommodated in the county's trails plan document, providing the opportunity for connectivity between the maximum numbers of places within the community. Many corridors extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries and will necessitate the cooperation of many entities.



Environmental Constraints

The ease of securing development permits and the feasibility of construction was considered with the analysis of system gaps. Avoiding limited right-of-ways, steep topography, sensitive natural resources, and other constraints, when possible, will make future trail and bikeway projects financially feasible and demonstrate responsible land stewardship.



History, Natural and Cultural Resources

The Gap analysis should acknowledge the rich, cultural and natural resources of Clark County. Thoughtful placement of trail corridors can highlight the unique attributes of the county, turning trails into linear laboratories and living classrooms. The resources of Clark County help shape the identity of the community and make this place more desirable to live and visit.



Trail Users and Trends

The trail and bikeway system needs to reflect current trends in walking and non-motorized transportation. Walking on paths continues to be the most desired form of recreation and exercise by the broadest segment of our community. Bicycling, both on and off-road, rollerblading, skating and other wheeled transportation can utilize the county's trails and bikeways. Equestrians and non-motorized boaters continue to utilize land and water corridors of Clark County. The Trails and Bikeway Plan needs to be flexible enough to adapt to the future trends of recreation and transportation.



Funding and Grant Eligibility

The gap analysis must consider all potential funding opportunities available. Grant funds administered by the state's Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation are evaluated on selection criteria that include; need "close to home" utilization, connectivity, etc. Considering these evaluation criteria into corridor planning will increase the opportunities for grant-funded development. Trail and bikeway alignments need to consider additional funding opportunities including inclusion or partnerships with road projects listed in the Transportation Improvement Plan, and opportunities with other public agencies and partnerships.

High priority projects are those that can be built along with other transportation projects within the Clark County's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to assure efficiency in costs and increase possibility of funding. Several regional trails are planned on the same alignment as several of the upcoming (TIP) projects. The current TIP list is available on Clark County's website at www.clark.wa.gov/TIP.html.



FEASIBILITY / REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Many of the existing and currently proposed trail corridors coincide with stream corridors. This coexistence creates the natural experience that many trail users seek. It also creates the need for careful planning and some creativity to navigate the permitting requirements due to sensitive lands, habitat areas, and flood plains. Development review approval must also be obtained from the governing jurisdiction.

