

# 10

## Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities



2024 Regional Transportation Plan

# 10 Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities

Bicycling and walking are integral components of the transportation system in Franklin County. Expanding local bicycling and walking links is a focus in Franklin County. There is a strong emphasis on identifying and planning for bicycle and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure improvements that will make connections within and between communities.

During the past four years, the FRCOG assisted Franklin County communities in identifying bicycle and pedestrian improvement projects; proposing initiatives to promote healthy transportation options; and assessing potential improvements to incorporate bicycling, walking, and complete streets into existing infrastructure projects. The FRCOG continues to embrace the principles of complete streets and works to help the towns of Franklin County understand the design components and navigate the technical aspects of the Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program. Complete Streets is a transportation planning concept in which streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. They are safe for people to walk/bicycle to and from their destinations and also allow buses to run more efficiently. The concept of Complete Streets reinforces a way of thinking about transportation planning and routinely integrating alternative modes as part of the transportation system.

Currently, there is an increased emphasis in transportation planning on improving the built environment to support healthy communities. Safe access to places that encourage physical activity and healthy food is a priority. In addition, the development of transportation infrastructure to support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is essential. The FRCOG has increasingly incorporated age-friendly and dementia-friendly components and considerations into planning.

## **Bicycle Facilities Planning**

The development of the region-wide Franklin County Bikeway continues to be a priority. In addition, completing safety and infrastructure improvements to expand opportunities for everyday bicycling is also a focus. The FRCOG looks to statewide and regional bicycle facility planning documents for guidance in this work.

## **Statewide Planning Efforts**

The *Massachusetts Bicycle Transportation Plan Update* was completed in 2021. Through this plan, MassDOT committed to making walking and biking a safe, comfortable, and convenient option for everyday trips. The focus of the updated plan is creating connected networks of safe, comfortable, and convenient bikeways to enhance mobility, public health, environmental sustainability, and economic development opportunities. MassDOT also compiled *A Municipal Resource Guide for Bikeability* to provide technical guidance to communities. The Resource Guide focuses on seven topics related to the planning, design, and maintenance of bikeable communities. The two documents represent MassDOT's continued commitment to multi-modalism and then expansion of zero-emission options statewide.

## **Franklin Regional Bicycle Planning**

The varied geography and topography of Franklin County pose challenges to the use of bicycles for transportation. The rural development patterns in some parts of the region mean that individuals may have to travel long distances to work and run routine daily errands. These challenges are considerations when developing bicycle routes and facilities for the region. However, the geographic conditions and scenic landscapes also contribute to the appeal of bicycling in Franklin County. There are many rural roads with low traffic volumes and picturesque rural landscapes. The FRCOG is committed to improving bicycle facilities in the region and continues to look at new ways to enhance the atmosphere for bicycling. The FRCOG completed an update of the Franklin County Bikeway Plan in 2009, which outlines a network of bicycling routes throughout the region. The FRCOG will complete an update of the Bikeway Plan as part of the 2023 Unified Planning Work Program.

## **Existing Bicycle Facilities**

### **Franklin County Bikeway**

The Franklin County Bikeway is a region-wide network of bike routes. Approximately 44 miles of the network are constructed as either off-road multi-use trails (approximately 5 miles) or on-road signed shared roadway routes (approximately 44 miles). There are an additional approximately 240 miles of shared roadway routes that are not currently marked with wayfinding signs, but are shown on bikeway maps giving cyclists in the region suggested routes to reach their destinations. Both digital and paper maps are available. Funding is secured and wayfinding signs will be installed on the unsigned routes during 2023. A map of the entire Franklin County Bikeway is at the end of this chapter.

The following are descriptions of the 44 miles of off-road and shared roadway facilities that are constructed and/or signed as bike routes in Franklin County.

#### The Riverside Greenway (Greenfield)

The Riverside Greenway is a 1-mile multi-use path located in the Town of Greenfield. Built on an abandoned road, this path connects a densely populated residential area with a heavily used public recreation facility. The path is owned and maintained by the Town of Greenfield and includes a bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the Green River.

#### East Mineral Road Bridge (Montague and Erving)

The East Mineral Road Bridge is a former vehicle bridge that crosses the Millers River from East Mineral Road in Montague to River Road in Erving. It was reconstructed for use as a bicycle and pedestrian bridge and provides an important link in the Franklin County Bikeway network because it allows bicyclists and pedestrians access north and south without having to cross Route 2 at grade. Route 2 is challenging because of the high vehicle volumes and speeds.

#### Canalside Trail (Deerfield and Montague)

The Canalside Trail is a 3.27-mile off-road multi-use path located in the Towns of Montague and Deerfield. It links the Connecticut River Great Falls Discovery Center and Unity Park in the Village of Turners Falls in Montague, to McClelland Farm Road, located off of River Road, in northeast Deerfield. The path travels next to the Connecticut River Canal in Turners Falls and along an abandoned rail corridor including a railroad bridge over the confluence of the Deerfield and Connecticut Rivers in Montague City and Deerfield. There is parking at each end of the Canalside Trail (in Turners Falls and East Deerfield).

#### Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge on Greenfield Road

The bicycle and pedestrian bridge on Greenfield Road replaced a former vehicle bridge over the B&M Railroad that was removed. The bridge is on the Connecticut River Route, a shared roadway route that travels along the Connecticut River from Montague to Sunderland. The bridge is an important link on a popular regional bicycling route.

### **Signed Shared Roadway Sections of the Franklin County Bikeway**

The following Franklin County Bikeway shared roadway routes are marked with Franklin County Bikeway trailblazing signs.

- The Northfield Connector is a 14-mile route that links Montague and the East Mineral Road Bridge to the Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center, downtown Northfield, and inter-regional routes in New Hampshire. It travels along Millers Falls Road and East Mineral Road in Montague; River Road in Erving; Pine Meadow Road, Millers Falls Road, and Main Street in Northfield.

- The Greenfield-Montague Loop Route connects the Canalside Trail, the Northfield Connector, and the Riverside Greenway using local streets including McClelland Farm Road and River Road in Deerfield; Deerfield Street, Mill Street, River Street, Shelburne Road, Woodward Road, Colrain Street, Riverside Drive, Nash’s Mill Road, Leyden Road, Silver Street, Country Club Road, Log Plain Road, Lampblack Road, and Bascom Road in Greenfield; and Hoe Shop Road, West Gill Road and Main Road in Gill.
- The Connecticut River Route travels along the Connecticut River from Montague to Sunderland on Greenfield Road, Meadow Road, and South Ferry Road in Montague, and Falls Road and North Main Street in Sunderland.
- The Leverett-Amherst Route travels from Millers Falls Road through Montague Center and Leverett Center to North Amherst. The route travels on Lake Pleasant Road, Montague Road, Old Northfield Road, Turners Falls Road, Main Street, School Street, Old Sunderland Road, Old Stage Road, and Gunn Road in Montague; Long Plain Road, Montague Road, Depot Road and Amherst Road in Leverett.

## **Proposed Future Bikeway Projects**

### **Shared Roadway – Franklin County Bikeway Route Signs**

The 2009 *Franklin County Bikeway Plan Update* identified additional shared roadway routes and potential off-road facilities throughout Franklin County. Planning work was completed to identify locations for the installation of Franklin County Bikeway logo signs on these routes, expanding the number of trailblazed miles to approximately 240. Funding is secured for installation and the signs are scheduled to be installed in 2023.

### **Schell Bridge Replacement (Northfield)**

This project proposes to remove the existing deteriorated and closed Schell Bridge structure and replace it with a new multi-span bicycle-pedestrian bridge over the Connecticut River in Northfield. It is a link in the Franklin County Bikeway, Connecticut River Scenic Byway, and Bay State Greenway route networks. The new bridge was designed and bid for construction in 2022, but the construction price exceeded the funding available so the project did not go to construction. MassDOT is currently reassessing the construction scope and seeking alternative construction funding.

### **Millers River Greenway (Orange and Athol)**

The development of a bikeway/greenway along the Millers River connecting Orange and Athol has been an interest of the two towns for many years. There has been extensive

discussion and consideration of on and off road alternatives for connecting downtown Orange and Athol. Most recently (June 2022), with funding through a MassTrails Grant, a consultant completed a Feasibility Report for the Town of Orange. As part of the report, Howard Stein Hudson completed a high-level assessment of the alternatives for the 5.2-mile connection between the Orange Riverfront Park and the Millers River Environmental Park in Athol. The route being considered included a sidepath for the 3.7-mile section on East River Street and Daniel Shays Highway in Orange. In Athol, the route becomes Brookside Road, before transitioning off-road just south of the McDonald's restaurant to the south of the intersection with Route 2A (South Main Street) in Athol. The off-road section of the path would travel on the undeveloped road layout of Proctor Avenue where a new bridge would be constructed to cross the Millers River and travel through Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) owned riverfront land. The proposed path would end at the Alan E. Rich Environmental Park in Athol. This feasibility study provided an estimate of \$1,765,000 to complete the design and approximately \$14 million to construct.

### **Erving – Wendell Path**

It is widely recognized that Route 2 is not recommended for bicyclists because it has a narrow and winding layout, lacks roadway shoulders in many locations, and has high traffic volumes and speeds. On two occasions (2002 and 2011), the FRCOG explored potential bicycle and pedestrian links in Erving other than Route 2 that could link the areas of Erving known as Farley and Erving'side to Erving Center. Routes in Erving Center included potential connections from Mountain Road to the east and a route through the town-owned cemetery on Cemetery Road to Flagg Hill Road.

Old Farley Road in Wendell was identified as a potential off-road walking/bicycling route option. It is an existing dirt road that travels west from Arch Street in Erving Center approximately 2 miles and connects to Posk Place. Much of this route travels on land within the Wendell State Forest, which is owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). It terminates at Posk Place in Wendell near the New England National Scenic Trail hiking trail and a popular fishing location. In addition, there is another possible link to the east of Arch Street which is also within the Wendell State Forest that links to Sears Road and Wendell Depot Road. The Town of Erving applied for a MassTrails grant to complete a feasibility study for this route to develop a shared-use path on the south side of the Millers River in Wendell as part of the fiscal year 2023 round.

## **Rabbit Run Rail Trail Feasibility Study (Athol and New Salem)**

The Town of Athol received a MassTrails grant in Fiscal Year 2022 to conduct a feasibility study to develop the Rabbit Run Rail Trail that will connect Athol Center to the North Quabbin Reservation. The railroad traveled from Athol to Springfield before the Quabbin Reservoir was built, and remnants of the rail bed still exist through South Athol and New Salem. A feasibility study is underway to see if it is practical to recreate this transportation route for a multi-use non-motorized trail. The 6.2-mile trail will create a connection from the town-owned Bidwell property in Athol to the North Quabbin Reservation.

## **Greenfield to Whately/South Deerfield**

Route 5/10 is a popular travel and commuting corridor for bicyclists. There are businesses, attractions, and large regional employers located along the route that are destinations and potential destinations for bicyclists. In addition, the Whately Park and Ride Lot is serviced by FRTA and PVTA on Route 5/10 to the south in Whately. Over the years, interest in roadway improvements and/or the development of alternative routes to better accommodate bicycle travel from Greenfield to Deerfield and Whately has been expressed. Improvements along this route will better connect Greenfield and northern Deerfield to South Deerfield and Whately.

### Improvements on Route 5/10

Bicycle facility improvements were completed in the southern section of Routes 5/10/116 in South Deerfield (from the Whately Park and Ride Lot at the intersection of Route 5/10/116 and Sunderland Road to the traffic light at the intersection of Route 5/10 and Conway Road) including a buffered bike lane in 2022. The northern section of Route 5/10 in Deerfield, from the intersection of Route 5/10 and Conway Road (Route 116) to Greenfield, has a narrower right-of-way. A separated bike lane was added on the section of Route 5/10 from just north of the intersection with Route 116 (Conway Road) to just south of the intersection with North Main Street/Mill Village Road. The roadway and shoulders narrow to the north of the separated bike lane, and while a separated bike lane may not be feasible but restriping or shoulder widening to better accommodate bicycles may be an option.

### Route 5/10 Bypass

There has been interest in exploring alternatives to bicycling on Route 5/10 in Deerfield. The Deerfield Master Plan (April 2000) recommended the construction of an off-road bike path to the south of the Cheapside Bridge and west of Route 5/10. One alternative off road route travels near the Deerfield River to Pine Hill Road (or Old Ferry Road which is a 1732 county road) and would provide a connection for bicyclists into Historic Deerfield. There is currently

a dirt road along a portion of this route that could potentially be improved as a bike trail. Further analysis of the feasibility of this route is needed to determine if this route is feasible.

### **Greenfield Meade Street and Green River Trail Connection (Greenfield)**

The proposed Meade Street Bike Path provides an off road connection from River Street and Mill Street to Deerfield Street in Greenfield. This is an important link both within Greenfield and as part of the regional bikeway network. The path is close to downtown Greenfield and offers a better connection to the Franklin County Bikeway by providing an alternative to traveling on the busy northern section of Deerfield Street (Route 5/10). The proposed bike path will improve the link between neighborhoods, downtown, and the John W. Olver Transit Center, which is the hub for public transit and passenger rail service. It will also link to a new on-street bicycle lane on River and Mill Streets with funding from the Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program.

In addition, the proposed Green River Trail would provide further connection to the Riverside Greenway. It is an off road link from the intersection of Route 2A, River Street, and Shelburne Road to Colrain Street. The proposed addition includes the construction of a bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the Green River to the northwest of the intersection of Route 2A and Shelburne Road and the construction of a trail along the river on the former Wedgewood Gardens property to Colrain Street.

### **Turners Falls Road - Greenfield to Montague Connection**

During the public outreach meeting for the Regional Transportation Plan, the need for an improved bicycle connection between Greenfield and Turners Falls was expressed. In particular concerns about bicycling on Turners Falls Road were expressed. The possibility of an alternative route for a trail away from the road was also mentioned. Further research of potential options is needed to determine the feasibility of alternatives to riding on Turners Falls Road.

### **Connections to New Hampshire and Vermont**

The FRCOG has worked to coordinate bicycle planning with neighboring New Hampshire and Vermont. Past projects have included the development of the Tri-State Connecticut River Scenic Byway Bikeway route and map (see further description below). In the past, the FRCOG staff participated in a planning effort in New Hampshire aimed at addressing challenges and opportunities along the approximately 21.5-mile stretch of the Ashuelot Rail Trail between Hinsdale and Keene, New Hampshire. This would better connect the southern Vermont and New Hampshire trails and bike routes to Northfield, Gill, and Erving.



## **Existing Bicycle Promotional and Advocacy Programs**

The FRCOG works to encourage bicycling for transportation and recreational purposes to Franklin County residents and visitors. The FRCOG has worked on several initiatives and completed projects to educate the public about bicycling in the region and enhance the experience. The FRCOG continues to develop promotional materials and programs to educate the public about the existing facilities and encourage bicycling instead of driving. Maps and informational resources have been developed. In addition, the FRCOG is working to promote bicycle tourism, improve access to recreation, and coordinate with regional tourism advocates.

### **Franklin County Bikeway Maps**

There are three Franklin County Bikeway route maps: the Western Franklin County Bikeway map, the Central Franklin County Bikeway map, and the Eastern Franklin County Bikeway map. The maps were most recently updated in 2018, and classify each route as novice, intermediate, or advanced to help bicyclists to determine the most suitable route to ride given their ability and physical fitness level. The maps also include information on the services available in the area, and elevation changes a rider will encounter. In addition to the paper maps, digital maps are available on the FRCOG's website ([www.frcog.org](http://www.frcog.org)). These maps are intended for viewing online and are not of a high enough resolution for large-scale printing. Additionally, the bikeway route information can be viewed through Google Earth maps (the routes can be downloaded from the FRCOG website to be added to Google Earth).

### **Tri-State Connecticut River Scenic Byway Bike Route Map**

Additionally, a bicycle route map for the tri-state (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont) area of the Connecticut River Scenic Byway was developed in 2014. The FRCOG worked jointly with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the Southwest Region Planning Commission (in New Hampshire), and the Windham Regional Commission (in Vermont) to develop a print map, as well as online versions of the map that can be viewed in Google Earth (downloadable from [www.frcog.org](http://www.frcog.org)). This primarily on-road route connects Greenfield, Keene, NH, and Brattleboro, VT. Wayfinding signs were also installed along the routes.

### **Interactive Bike Map**

The FRCOG developed an interactive online bicycle tourism map. The map includes lodging, Amtrak Vermonter train stations, park and ride lots, Franklin County Bikeway routes, Tri-State Bikeway routes, photos along the bikeways, the Robert Frost Trail, locations of bike parking racks, the New England Scenic Trail, Franklin Regional Transit Authority Bus routes, and the Scenic Byways. The online map link will be posted on the FRCOG website.

## **Bike and Recreation Promotional Project**

The FRCOG continues to work collaboratively with the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce to develop a recreational marketing program with a strong emphasis on recreational bicycling. The FRCOG has worked on several initiatives and completed projects to educate the public about bicycling in the region and enhance the experience. In addition, the FRCOG is working to promote bicycle tourism, improve access to recreation, and coordinate with regional tourism advocates.

## **Bike-Friendly Business Program**

The FRCOG designed a Bike Friendly Business Program to recognize and promote Franklin County businesses that welcome and support the bicycling community. To launch the program, the FRCOG sent a mailing to 300 businesses with information about the program and the positive reasons to become a bicycle-friendly establishment. Bike-friendly businesses provide conveniences that support bicycling and can draw cyclists to their establishments such amenities include bike parking, water and restrooms, repair stations, snacks, bike rentals, and more. By providing these amenities participating businesses can enroll in the program and are included in Bike Friendly Business promotional materials, and receive a window logo to display that shows their participation. Work to roll out the program was stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic but is continuing in 2023.

## **Bike Week Breakfast Event**

The FRCOG regularly participates in Bay State Bike Week and Bike Month activities during May by hosting a breakfast for bicyclists. The annual event is a great occasion to get together with the bicycling community and to provide an opportunity for local bicyclists to network with one another. The event also allows FRCOG staff to receive input about the current bicycle infrastructure, and desired improvements. In addition, participants have the opportunity to learn how to load bikes onto FRTA buses and to check out the new FRTA low-floor accessible bus.

## **Off Road Bike Network**

The FRCOG is working to support mountain biking networks in Franklin County. In 2022, the FRCOG completed a project with PVPC and BRPC to create maps and resources to promote the mountain biking trail networks in western Franklin County. The project also included researching best practices and lessons learned from other places in the country that have marketed their areas as mountain biking destinations. In addition, the scope included gathering information on the existing connections and gaps to plan a comprehensive

mountain biking trail network. A map for the mountain biking trails at Kenneth Dubuque Memorial State Forest in Hawley was compiled as well as a report with the findings of the project and recommendations for future actions.

## **Bicycle Safety Campaign**

Bicycle safety is a concern. The FRCOG considers bicycling to be an integral part of the regional transportation system in Franklin County and encourages and promotes the use of bicycles as a viable means of transportation. Safety is paramount and bicyclists can be at an increased risk when sharing the road with motorists. To stress the importance of safety for cyclists and motorists, the FRCOG developed and launched a campaign around the message Drive Safe-Bike Safe-Together in May 2019. The campaign was aimed at educating motorists and bicyclists about the rules of the road and sharing the road. It was developed with local partners and stakeholders including the Greenfield Recreation Department, the Greenfield Police Department, and the MassBike Pioneer Valley Chapter. As part of the development of the materials for the campaign local cyclists were photographed and used as part of the messaging. Through a combination of safety posters, billboards, advertisements on the side of FRTA buses, and safety flashcards, the FRCOG was able to lay the groundwork for promoting bicycle safety. The FRCOG continues to implement the campaign and look for new outlets to get the message out.



**Bike safety posters on display at Sunderland Elementary School on Bike Walk and Roll Day**

## **Bikes on Buses and Rail**

All Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) and Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) buses that operate in Franklin County are equipped to carry bicycles. This allows commuters to travel a portion of their trip by bus and a portion by bicycle. Additionally, the Amtrak Vermonter train service carries bicycles. A reservation with Amtrak for the bicycle is required

and there is limited capacity. Future public transportation system expansions, as well as the future development of regional rail services through the region, should include space for carrying more bicycles to encourage the use of bicycles as a viable form of transportation.

### **Bicycle Parking and Other Amenities**

The FRCOG encourages the installation of additional bicycle parking to make bicycling convenient. The FRCOG completed a bicycle parking purchase program and provided bicycle parking racks to communities in Franklin County free of charge. Through this project, the FRCOG purchased 54 bike racks for 11 towns and 3 school districts including Greenfield Community College (GCC).

The FRCOG also encourages the installation of other bicycle related amenities such as bicycle repair stations and pumps in convenient locations throughout Franklin County. During 2022, the FRCOG provided bicycle repair stations to Orange, Sunderland, and Montague.

### **Bike Share**

During 2015 a bike share program feasibility study was completed. This plan examined options for implementing a bike share program in Greenfield and the possible locations where docking stations could be located. There is currently a renewed interest in the implementation of a bike share program, and work is underway to determine the best approach to establishing one.

### **Pedestrian Facilities Planning Efforts**

#### **Massachusetts Statewide Pedestrian Plan**

In 2018, MassDOT completed a Statewide Pedestrian Plan. The Plan recommends policies, programs, and projects to guide MassDOT's decision making and capital investments in pedestrian infrastructure. It is intended to provide direction to municipalities to improve walkability in local communities. The Plan recognizes the importance of walking as a part of daily life and defines a vision for Massachusetts in which all people have a safe and comfortable walking option for short trips. The focus of the Plan is to reduce the demand for new vehicle trips, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote public health, and support economic development. It acknowledges that when pedestrian facilities, such as sidewalks, ramps, and crosswalks, are absent, poorly maintained, or unsafe, it puts people in danger, encourages trips in cars that could reasonably be made on foot, or limits mobility altogether. MassDOT also recognizes the importance of pedestrian safety and commits to working

towards eliminating all pedestrian deaths in the Commonwealth. The Plan also outlines how MassDOT will support its municipal partners in their efforts to improve walkability. There is a companion document to the Plan, the Municipal Resource Guide for Walkability, which is intended to help towns improve their walking infrastructure.

## **Franklin County Pedestrian Planning**

The focus of pedestrian planning in Franklin County continues to be on identifying walking connections and planning for infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks, safe crosswalks, and connections to shops, services, and residences whenever possible. The FRCOG recognizes that there are challenges to walking and planning for walkable communities in a rural region. However, there are many opportunities to implement solutions that make the infrastructure safer and easier to walk.

The FRCOG completed an update of the Regional Pedestrian Plan for Franklin County in 2021. The vision of the Franklin County Regional Pedestrian Plan is to provide a comprehensive resource that identifies tools and strategies for developing pedestrian-related infrastructure improvements in Franklin County. Franklin County already has many great places to walk. By improving the existing infrastructure and bridging the gaps in the system, more people will be encouraged to walk. The Regional Pedestrian Plan goals are to:

- Encourage and promote walking as a viable mode of transportation and as a recreational activity
- Improve safety for pedestrians
- Enhance pedestrian networks
- Identify improvement projects to enhance connectivity for walking, meet compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Identify resources for maintaining and repairing existing pedestrian infrastructure, and provide towns with information on implementing pedestrian improvement projects
- Promote a regional multimodal transportation system by facilitating pedestrian connections with other modes of transportation, including transit, biking, and driving
- Identify infrastructure improvements that will improve accessibility to schools, senior centers, town centers, and other local walking destinations

The plan provides a comprehensive resource that identifies tools and strategies for developing pedestrian-related infrastructure improvements in Franklin County. The plan is also intended to inspire and encourage towns to consider pedestrian accessibility whenever feasible. It is particularly important to identify improvements that can be incorporated into

larger road projects. The FRCOG has focused on planning for complete streets as a way to identify pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements that can be added to other construction projects.

## **Existing Pedestrian Facilities**

### **Recently Completed and Under Construction Pedestrian Improvements**

#### **Buckland Conway Street, South Street and Conway Road**

The Conway Street, South Street and Conway Road reconstruction project in Buckland included 1,100 feet of sidewalk reconstruction to achieve ADA compliance. This project is under construction and scheduled to be completed in 2023.

#### **Buckland Upper North Street**

A sidewalk is needed on Upper North Street as an integral part of the route that connects Shelburne Falls to the Mohawk Regional School and the town recreation area. Frequently pedestrians walk on the shoulder of this road. The Town of Buckland is working to complete the design of this pedestrian improvement project and it is proposed for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). It is proposed to be advertised for construction in the fall of 2023 with a 2024 construction.

#### **Charlemont Roadway Reconstruction and Village Traffic Calming Project**

Pedestrian infrastructure improvements on Route 2 in Charlemont Center are included as part of a 0.9-mile roadway reconstruction project that begins approximately 600 feet west of where Route 8A crosses the Deerfield River and ends just east of South Street. The project is designed and scheduled to be constructed beginning in 2019. It includes roadway and sidewalk reconstruction work and the construction of various traffic calming measures in the Charlemont village center. All existing sidewalks and curb-cut ramps will be reconstructed to achieve accessibility compliance. The project also includes bicycle accommodation.

#### **Colrain Center Intersection Improvements**

This project reconstructed the three-legged intersection of Main Road, Jacksonville Road, and Greenfield Road in the Colrain village center. It included reconstructing the intersection and its approaches from 0.1 mile north and south, and 0.5 mile west to the town offices. Further, the project included improving the sight distance and pedestrian accommodation in the center of Colrain by creating an accessible network of sidewalks, ramps, and crosswalks to link popular village center locations. Approximately 0.5 miles of new sidewalk, with landscaping and streetscape elements to promote pedestrian mobility in the village were constructed. Construction was completed in 2021.



**New sidewalk on Main Road in Colrain center**

Deerfield – Whately Route 5/10 Reconstruction

The Routes 5/10 resurfacing project in Whately and Deerfield was completed in 2022 and included new sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian signals at Elm Street. Pedestrian improvements were completed from south of Route 5/10 overpass near Interstate 91 Exit 24 to just north of the intersection of Route 5/10 and Route 116 (Conway Road). Sidewalks were constructed where they previously did not exist.



**South Main Street sidewalk under construction in Sunderland.**



### Erving Pedestrian Infrastructure Improvements

The Erving Streetscape Improvement Project was awarded funding from the National Scenic Byway Program to complete the design and construction of sidewalk and streetscape improvements along the Connecticut River Scenic Byway (Route 63) in Erving. The construction of the sidewalk was completed in 2019. A new sidewalk and pedestrian improvements were constructed on a one-mile section of Route 63 in Erving from the north side of the bridge over the Millers River on Bridge Street (at the Erving/Montague town border) to the Erving Senior Center and Library at Care Drive. The project area is in the residential neighborhood known as Erving.



**Sidewalk under construction in Erving.**

### Greenfield Route 2 West of the Rotary

There is currently a project to complete traffic signal and intersection improvements on Route 2 at two locations: Colrain Road and the Big Y entrance. The project also includes new sidewalks and wheelchair ramps. The project is in the final stages of design and is scheduled to be advertised for construction in 2023.

### Greenfield Wisdom Way

This project consists of the reconstruction of 0.43 miles of Wisdom Way in Greenfield, from 480 feet east of Petty Plain Road to Mill Street. It consists of the reconstruction of retaining walls, drainage repairs, new wheelchair ramps, sidewalk reconstruction, pavement markings, signage, and a new 10-foot wide shared use path along the side of the road. The project is currently under construction with a projected completion date of 2023.



### Montague Complete Streets Improvements

Prominent pedestrian improvements have been completed in Montague with funding from the Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding program including Main Street pedestrian improvements in Montague Center, improvements on Millers Falls Road/Unity Street/High Street, pedestrian crossing improvements at Avenue A/First Street, Keith Street pedestrian improvement/ elementary school connection, Montague Street Pedestrian Improvement/ Safe Route to School, pedestrian crossing improvements at Main Street Post Office, and Pedestrian Improvements on Turnpike Road. Montague has successfully received two rounds of implementation funding through the Complete Streets Funding Program.

### South Deerfield Crosswalk Improvements at locations on North Main Street

The Town of Deerfield received a MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant to improve two crosswalks on North Main Street in South Deerfield. Improvements will be completed in 2023 near the Frontier Regional School and the Deerfield Public Library. The improvements are intended to help pedestrians crossing the street be more visible and to slow traffic through this section of the roadway.

### Sunderland Complete Streets Improvements

As part of the Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program Sunderland applied and received funding for two rounds of implementation funding. As part of the second round of implementation funding, Sunderland has constructed a sidewalk on South Silver Lane, completed bicycle accommodation on Falls Road, and constructed a new sidewalk on South Main Street.

### Sunderland North Main Street

This project consisted of box-widening and resurfacing North Main Street from the Route 116/47 intersection to Claybrook Drive. It also included sidewalk reconstruction, new wheelchair ramps, drainage system replacement, and new pavement markings and signage. This project was completed in 2022.



North Main Street in Sunderland with Improved Crosswalk

### **Future Pedestrian Infrastructure Improvements**

Several pedestrian infrastructure projects in the region are in various stages of planning and design. The following are brief descriptions of these projects.

#### Buckland Route 112 Connection to Mohawk Regional School and the Buckland Recreation Area

A sidewalk is needed on Route 112 as part of the route to connect Shelburne Falls to the Mohawk Regional School and the town recreation area. Frequently pedestrians walk on the shoulder of these roads of Route 112 is a busy Road with fast travel speeds. Improving this walking route for pedestrians is a priority for the Town of Buckland. A sidewalk is desired, but because of issues related to winter maintenance, MassDOT is designing a shoulder widening project to accommodate both pedestrians and bicycles. There are continued concerns that a wide shoulder is not the best option for providing pedestrian accommodation, and the FRCOG will continue discussions throughout project development to design a project that all support.

#### Greenfield Downtown Complete Streets Improvements on Main Street (Route 2A)

This project proposes comprehensive complete streets improvements on Main Street in Greenfield from the intersection with Colrain Street to the intersection of Main/High/Crescent Streets. Proposed major improvements include the addition of separated bike lanes, pedestrian refuge islands, curb extensions, Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons, revised left turn pockets at side streets, dedicated curbside bus stops, upgrade of sidewalks and wheelchair ramps to be ADA compliant, roadway resurfacing, and geometric reconfiguration of the Main/High Street intersection as either a roundabout or

modified stop controlled intersection. Bus stops which are currently signed but do not have sufficient dedicated curb space for bus maneuvers are proposed to have enlarged curb space and bus shelters. This project is proposed for construction in 2027.

#### Greenfield Montague City Road

This project is a mile long. It is from the previously completed Cheapside Intersection Project to the General Pierce Bridge. The project will consist of new sidewalks constructed on both sides of the road where possible, with new/improved crossings. The project is scheduled to be advertised for construction in 2026.

#### Greenfield Turners Falls Road

Turners Falls Road in Greenfield is a priority for pedestrian improvements because it is an important connection from Turners Falls to Greenfield. Turners Falls Road is a steep winding hill that descends from east Greenfield into the village of Turners Falls in Montague via the White Bridge. The route is frequently traveled by pedestrians and bicyclists, but it does not have a sidewalk or a lane/shoulder to accommodate bicycles. On the west side of Turners Falls Road, there is a steep incline with rock outcroppings. On the east side of the road, there is a steep drop down a large hill to the Connecticut River. On numerous occasions, concerns over the frequent and regular use of this route (Turners Falls Road and Loomis Road) by pedestrians and the lack of infrastructure were expressed to the FRCOG.

Turners Falls Road links to 5th Street and Canal Street in Turners Falls. It is also a link to the Canalside Trail Bikepath. This route is an important gateway to Turners Falls and connects two large low income and minority areas. The route has a high volume of vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic. The FRCOG examined this route as part of the Complete Streets assessment work and provided recommendations for better pedestrian and bicycle accessibility. The deteriorated condition of the sidewalks and curbing on the White Bridge and the Canal Bridge are also of concern along this route. The pedestrian section of the Bridge is closed and has forced pedestrians to use this route to walk on the road.

As part of the development of this plan, many comments were received as part of the public participation process about the need for a sidewalk and safer biking infrastructure on Turners Falls Road. At the public input meeting for this plan, an alternative route along the river was mentioned as a possible off road option. Additional research is needed to determine the feasibility of that alternative.

#### Greenfield Leyden Road

Leyden Road is a frequently used walking route that does not have sidewalks on the 1 mile section from Nash's Mill Road to Leyden Woods Road. It is a main route from Leyden

Woods, a densely populated housing complex, into downtown Greenfield, and it intersects with Nash's Mill Road within a ½ mile of the Greenfield Swimming and Recreation Area and the terminus of the Riverside Greenway Bike Path. Additionally, there are densely developed residential neighborhoods, including an affordable housing development on Leyden Road and the surrounding area. This area is also an identified low income and minority area in Franklin County. Leyden Road is served by the Franklin Regional Transit Authority's (FRTA) Route 21 Greenfield Community Route bus. The lack of a sidewalk on this route was the focus of many comments received during public outreach for this plan. Installation of a sidewalk is a top priority; however, the design needs to be completed and is not currently underway.

#### Montague Connection from Turners Falls High School to the Franklin County Technical High School on Industrial Drive

The Town of Montague has expressed interest in working to improve the walking route that extends from Turners Falls High School on Turnpike Road to the Franklin County Technical High School on Industrial Drive. This connection is approximately 1 mile and it is a high priority because there are shared programs and students are often walking from one site to the other. The FRCOG is working to complete a comprehensive assessment and develop conceptual plans for improving this route.

#### Northfield Streetscape and Safety Improvements Phase II

Phase II of the Northfield Main Street (Route 10/63) Improvement Project involves intersection and pedestrian safety improvements in the center of town. The work will include the replacement of raised medians and relocation of flashing traffic signals; various crosswalk upgrades; new sidewalk construction; and other incidental work. The length of the project is approximately 2.65 miles, beginning at the intersection of Route 10 and Route 63 and extending to Moody Street.

#### Orange North Main Street

This project will reconstruct the road and repair drainage and retaining walls along a ½ mile section of North Main Street in downtown Orange. As part of this project, ADA accessible sidewalks will be constructed along with traffic signing, landscaping, and streetscape improvements. The project begins on North Main Street at the School Street intersection and ends at the intersection of Lincoln Avenue, a distance of approximately 0.4 miles. Construction is scheduled for 2024. The remainder of North Main Street to the Fisher Hill and Dexter Park Schools is in poor condition with roadway and sidewalk improvements needed. North Main Street connects the commercial downtown to the residential neighborhoods and is generally walkable if the infrastructure is improved. Pedestrian improvements are important in this area.

### Orange East Main Street

East Main Street (Route 2A) is a main travel route from downtown Orange to Athol. It is a commercially oriented business area with many of the businesses being automobile oriented in their design and access layout. However, East Main Street is also an important route for pedestrians and bicyclists. It is a key connection to essential services for the population of this area. It is within walking distance of many residential areas and is also part of the FRTA Greenfield/Orange bus route (Route 32). This area was examined for complete streets opportunities, and the construction of sidewalks, highly visible crosswalks, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant curb-ramps were recommended.

### Orange East Water Street

Water Street in downtown Orange links South Main Street to East Main Street. This route travels near Memorial Park, Rodney Hunt Manufacturing, the Orange District Court, and FRTA transit stop. This route is an important walking link within the downtown area of Orange. Recommendations to better accommodate pedestrians and bicycles include constructing sidewalks, relocating obstructions in the sidewalks, and painting all crosswalks to be more visible.

### Orange West River Street

West River Street in Orange is located south of the intersection of North, South, East, and West Main Streets (Route 2A and Route 122) in downtown Orange. West River Street is on the south side of the Millers River. The post office is at the corner of South Main Street and West River Street and is an area with low income and minority populations. Recommendations for improvements include realigning the road and narrowing the travel lanes to allow room for bike lanes and wide sidewalks. Improvements at the intersection of West River and South Main Street are recommended to improve the crosswalk and to shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians by installing a curb extension.

### South Deerfield Streetscape Improvements

South Deerfield village center is a pedestrian friendly area. Some streetscape design elements have been conceptually developed. The 2013 Downtown Deerfield Complete Streets and Livability Plan outlined some potential improvements to make the area more pedestrian and bicycle friendly, such as completing a pavement marking plan that accommodates bikes and pedestrians, designating Sugarloaf and Elm Streets as part of the Franklin County Bikeway, and installing landscaping barrels to slow traffic. Sidewalk, crosswalk, and curb ramp improvements are being completed on Sugarloaf Street but further improvements are needed on Elm Street, South Main Street, and North Main Street.

## **State Policies and Programs**

### **Mass in Motion**

The FRCOG Transportation Planning staff continues to coordinate and work with the Franklin County Mass in Motion program. Mass in Motion is a statewide initiative to promote healthy eating and active living in the places people live, learn, work, and play. The goal of the Franklin County Mass in Motion program is to increase physical activities and improve the nutrition of Franklin County and North Quabbin residents. Transportation planning staff worked with the Franklin County Mass in Motion staff to coordinate and spread the word about the complete streets funding program, age and dementia friendly built environment planning, and built environment improvements to increase walking and physical activity.

### **American's with Disability Act (ADA) Transition Plans**

The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requires communities to complete self-evaluations to identify barriers in programs and activities that prevent persons with disabilities from access. An ADA Transition Plan sets forth steps necessary to complete modifications identified through self-evaluation and provides a schedule for completing modifications. The FRCOG has assisted towns in Franklin County to compile an ADA Transition Plan. The sidewalk and pedestrian infrastructure are among the public facilities that are evaluated for compliance with accessibility requirements. It outlines a community's commitment to systematically addressing barriers to accessibility.

## **Ongoing Activities with Both Bicycle and Pedestrian Components**

### **Complete Streets at Bus Stops**

Transit is an important component of a multimodal system and livable community. Most trips using transit begin or end with a walk or bicycle ride. Therefore, improving the road condition for all modes of transportation near bus stops is essential to providing better services. In 2017, the FRCOG completed a project to examine four Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) bus stops for compliance with the principles of Complete Streets to identify potential complete streets enhancements that could improve the first and last mile experience. The bus stops on East River Street in Orange, Avenue A in Montague at the Carnegie Library/Food City, at Leyden Woods in Greenfield, and Elm Street at Elm Terrace in Greenfield were evaluated. The complete streets assessment work has helped to establish the ground work for the implementations projects described below.

### Greenfield Elm Street Bus Stop Improvements

With funding from the MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program, the Franklin Regional Transit Authority completed pedestrian improvements near the bus stop on Elm Street and Elm Terrace in Greenfield. The project included the construction of a section of sidewalk on the east side of Elm Street, bus stops with shelters, curb ramps, and a crosswalk connecting the stops that are on each side of the street.

### Montague Millers Falls Road and Industrial Boulevard Bus Stop Improvement Project

The FRTA was awarded funding from the MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Program to complete pedestrian improvements and bus stop improvements on Millers Falls Road and Industrial Drive in Montague. The project includes the development of bus stops with shelters, curb ramps, and a crosswalk connecting the stops that are on each side of the street. The project will be completed in 2023.

### **Safe Routes to School Program**

The Massachusetts Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program is intended to encourage walking and bicycling to school by providing technical assistance and support to schools. It also provides an opportunity for schools that are enrolled in the program to receive assistance in assessing and improving infrastructure within two miles of their school. The program is a grassroots initiative where individual schools design their own activities. The schools that are enrolled include:

- Bernardston Elementary School, Bernardston
- Colrain Central School, Colrain
- Erving Elementary School, Erving
- Gill Elementary School, Gill
- Discover School at Four Corners, Greenfield
- Federal Street School, Greenfield
- Math and Science Academy, Greenfield
- Newton Street School, Greenfield
- Greenfield Middle School, Greenfield
- Hillcrest Elementary School, Montague
- Sheffield Elementary School, Montague
- Sunderland Elementary School, Sunderland
- Whately Elementary School, Whately

The FRCOG continues to encourage schools to enroll in the program and has also provided support to schools that have enrolled by assisting with walking assessments.

### Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program

MassDOT launched the Massachusetts (MA) Complete Streets Funding Program in 2016. Complete streets is a transportation planning approach that considers all roadway users when designing improvements. Complete streets are designed to be safe and comfortable for all users including vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, transit users, and the movement of goods. The MA Complete Streets Funding Program is intended to encourage municipalities to include complete streets elements and infrastructure on locally-funded transportation projects. The program provides technical assistance and construction funding to eligible municipalities. To be eligible, towns must attend a training workshop, pass a complete streets policy, and compile a complete streets prioritization plan. Participating towns may apply for up to \$50,000 in technical assistance to complete a 5-year complete streets prioritization plan and up to \$500,000 in construction funding every 4 years. The following table summarizes the participation in the program by Franklin County towns.

### Participation of Franklin County Towns in the MA Complete Streets Funding Program

<b>Town</b>	<b>Adopted a Complete Streets Policy</b> (date approved by MassDOT)	<b>Compiled a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan</b> (date accepted by MassDOT)	<b>Awarded Funding for Implementation</b>
Buckland	✓ (4/16/2016)	✓ (9/4/2018)	FY 2020: \$133,797
Colrain	✓ (2/16/2016)	Submitted 4/7/2023 and under review	
Conway	Registered		
Deerfield	✓ (6/6/2019)	✓ (5/12/2020)	
Erving	✓ (10/2/2018)	✓ (5/21/2020)	FY2021: \$399,596
Gill	✓ (5/4/2022)		
Greenfield	✓ (5/6/2016)	✓ (8/22/2017)	FY 2018: \$375,070 FY2021: \$399,262
Leverett	Registered		
Montague	✓ (8/22/2018)	✓ (9/19/2018)	FY 2019: \$311,360 FY 2021: \$399,686
Northfield	✓	✓	FY 2021: \$372,620



<b>Town</b>	<b>Adopted a Complete Streets Policy</b> (date approved by MassDOT)	<b>Compiled a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan</b> (date accepted by MassDOT)	<b>Awarded Funding for Implementation</b>
	(3/28/2019)	(5/21/2020)	
Orange	✓ (10/18/2016)	✓ (5/21/2020)	FY 2022: \$399,990
Shutesbury	✓ (1/30/2020)		
Sunderland	✓ (6/10/2016)	✓ (3/29/2017)	FY2018: \$394,972 FY2020: \$333,871
Whately	✓ (7/29/2016)	✓ (8/16/2018)	FY 2019: \$209,585 FY 2022: \$165,098

**Public Input Received as Part of the Regional Transportation Planning Process Related to Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure**

The following comments related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure were received as part of the public outreach for the Regional Transportation Plan.

- **Turners Falls Road (Turners Falls/Greenfield)** - Need for pedestrian access along Turners Falls Rd connecting Turners Falls and Greenfield.
- **Route 63 and Route 47 (Montague)** is a dangerous intersection with low visibility when turning onto Route 63 from Route 47.
- **Route 2A (High Street) and Silver St (Greenfield)** is a dangerous intersection that needs better pedestrian crossings.
- **Leyden Road (Greenfield)** needs sidewalk(s) connecting Leyden Woods apartments and points downtown.
- **At Chapman Street and Pierce Street (Greenfield)** there is a need for better pedestrian access such as crosswalks given lots of people walk this stretch to the High School and Fosters supermarket.
- **Need for more pedestrian crossing beacons** to assist in crossing at locations in Greenfield and particularly at the intersection of Silver and Davis Streets.
- **Downtown South Deerfield (Deerfield)** needs better pedestrian access around the common.
- **State Street, Depot Street, Conway Street, and Ashfield Street (Buckland/Shelburne Falls)** intersection is a difficult and confusing area for pedestrians to navigate. There is a need for better signage, street marking, and flashing lights.
- **Crittenden Hill Loop, Route 112 (Buckland/Shelburne Falls)** there is a need for better pedestrian access along this portion of the loop as well as connecting to Mohawk Trail Regional School.

- In general **develop more multiuse trails** to make connections within communities and to important destinations.
- Consider Ebikes in future bicycle and transportation planning.

### **Recommendations for Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**

- Include pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements when appropriate into the scope of road construction projects.
- Implement specific improvements identified in the Franklin Regional Pedestrian Plan (2010), Franklin County Complete Streets Project (2012) and Franklin County Complete Streets Project Part 2 (2014), Complete Streets at Bus Stops (2018).
- Assist Towns interested in participating in the Complete Streets Funding Program.
- Assist Towns interested in participating in the Shared Streets and Spaces Program.
- Continue to support and assist Franklin County schools in the Massachusetts Safe Routes to School Program.
- Complete an update of the Franklin County Bikeway Plan.
- Further identify and evaluate the viability of potential extensions of the Franklin County Bikeway and potential connections to other bicycle trails and paths in the greater regional area.
- Improve roads for bicycle and pedestrian accommodation.
- Explore options to develop additional off road multiuse trails.
- Explore options for improving bicycle access between Greenfield and Montague including Turners Falls Road in Greenfield.
- Explore options for improving bicycle access on Route 116 in Sunderland.
- Explore options for improvements on Route 5/10 in Deerfield and Whately to make this route better for bicycles.
- Support efforts to implement the design work for the Millers River Greenway in Orange and Athol.
- Support efforts to implement the design work for the Rabbit Run Trail in Athol and New Salem.
- Support efforts to complete preliminary design for the Erving-Wendell Bike Path.
- Design and construct Meade Street Bikepath and Green River Trail in Greenfield.
- Update and distribute Franklin County Bikeway Maps to help promote bicycling in Franklin County.
- Explore the creation of a dock-less Bike Share system.
- Work to improve the pedestrian network by filling in the gaps where sidewalks and crosswalks are needed and prioritize ADA compliance projects.
- Consider the issue of winter maintenance and snow removal from sidewalks and ramps.

- Develop and implement a campaign to educate the public about safe pedestrian practices and promote walking as a transportation option.
- Improve the 5<sup>th</sup> Street gateway entrance to Turners Falls from Greenfield to better accommodate pedestrian flow and vehicle safety.
- Explore options for better lighting at crosswalks at night.
- Support the advancement of regional significant pedestrian infrastructure improvements including.
- Sidewalks are needed in the following regionally important locations:
  - Buckland: Route 112 and North Street
  - Bernardston: Route 10 in Bernardston town center
  - Deerfield: South Deerfield, North Main Street to Route 116
  - Erving: Route 2 in Erving Center
  - Greenfield: Leyden Road
  - Greenfield: Turners Falls Road
  - Greenfield: Route 2 west of the rotary. Pedestrian connections to the Big Y and Home Depot Plazas on Route 2 and also Colrain Road connecting from BJs to Greenfield Community College (there is not a sidewalk).
  - Greenfield: Main Street
  - Greenfield: Federal Street
  - Montague: Avenue A
  - Montague: Millers Falls Road
  - Montague: Intersection of Route 63 and Main Street in Millers Falls
  - Orange: Main Street (Route 2A, North and South Main Street)
  - Orange: River Street
  - Orange: Route 122
  - Shelburne: Bridge Street and Maple Street
  - Sunderland: Route 116
  - Sunderland: Route 116 and 47 intersection
  - Whately: Route 5/10 and Christian Lane