

# Healthy Transportation

## PLANNING FOR TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

### What is Healthy Transportation?

Healthy Transportation is a new way of thinking about getting from one place to another. Healthy Transportation incorporates various strategies ranging from traffic calming measures to bicycle and pedestrian facilities to promoting the health benefits of a more active community.

A growing number of planners and traffic engineers now advocate a different approach to defining transportation problems and solutions. These leaders are shifting from goals of speed and capacity to:

- Enhancing access to stores, schools, jobs, services
- Offering more diverse travel options
- Reducing the length of trips and vehicle miles traveled
- Reducing average speeds along roads.

The goals listed above are directly related to the fact that three-fourths of vehicle trips are short trips to schools, work, or to run errands.

### Healthy Transportation and the Horizon Plan

The Transportation Element of the Horizon Plan specifically addresses the Healthy Transportation needs of the Parish through each of the following Goals:

**Goal T3** Plan and develop a unified roadway system of thoroughfares based on function and relative importance, providing a proper balance of interstates, arterials, collectors, and local streets.

**Goal T5** Design the overall transportation system to integrate mass transit, carpools, bicycles, and pedestrians, and encourage the use of these alternative modes of travel to support a balanced transportation system.

**Goal T8** Plan to develop bikeways and pedestrian trails to foster the use of bicycles as an alternative mode of transportation.

**Goal T9** Provide safe and convenient facilities for pedestrian movement in public and private developments and improvements.

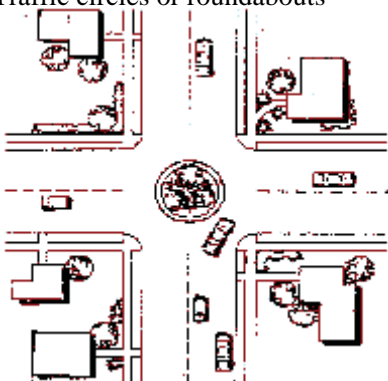
### Traffic Calming

Traffic calming measures are designed to slow automobile traffic, resulting in a more hospitable environment along the roadside for pedestrians, bicyclists, or even outdoor diners and shoppers.

Definitions of traffic calming vary, but tend to focus on three specific elements: Traffic education and encouragement, enforcement, and engineering. Traffic calming consists of operational measures such as enhanced police enforcement, speed displays, and a community speed watch program, as well as physical measures such as outlined in the chart below.

**Physical Traffic Calming Measures**

- Speed bumps or tables
- Narrowing traffic lanes
- Adding on-street parking
- Decorative, raised pavement in areas such as pedestrian crosswalks
- Addition of a median in the roadway
- Landscape with trees in medians or outside edges of roadway
- Sidewalk bump-outs at intersections
- Traffic circles or roundabouts



**Above:** Traffic Circles, such as seen in this illustration, are becoming an increasingly common means of traffic calming.

## Benefits of Walking and Cycling

The positive consequences of bicycling and walking as healthy modes of transportation, or as purely recreational activities, span across many aspects of our lives. They can be expressed in terms of the health of environment (and resulting health of all living things), as well as the health of individuals who are more physically active.

A transportation system that is conducive to bicycling and walking can reap many benefits in terms of reduced traffic congestion and improved quality of life. Economic rewards both to the individual and to society are also realized through reduced health care costs and reduced dependency on auto ownership (and the resulting insurance and maintenance costs). There are also other economic benefits of bicycling and walking that are more difficult to measure, such as the increased economic vitality of communities that have emphasized bicycle and pedestrian mobility.

## Bicycles are Transportation

### Types of Bikeways

There are three types of bikeways available for use in Baton Rouge. The Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee of the Capital Region Planning Commission created a Bicycle Plan for the City-Parish which includes designation of existing and proposed bikeways.

**Class I Bikeway** (Bike Trails or Paths) – Provides a completely separated right-of-way for the exclusive use of bicycles and pedestrians with cross-flow of motorized traffic minimized.

Approximately 18 miles of bike paths and trails are currently available in the City-Parish. An additional 23 miles are designated in the Bicycle Plan, including a 10-mile stretch along the levee at River Road which should begin construction in 2003.

**Class II Bikeway** (Bike Lane)– Provides striped lane for one-way bike travel on a street or highway. There are currently about 20 miles of bike lanes in the City-Parish, and over 35 additional miles programmed in the City-Parish Bicycle Plan.

**Class III Bikeway** (Bike Route)– Provides shared use with pedestrians or motor vehicles. Baton Rouge features just over 40 miles of signed bike routes, with an additional 42 miles programmed in the Bicycle Plan.

## Walking is Transportation

### Pedestrian Facilities

Pedestrian facilities include walking and jogging trails, sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks, or even special landscape features designed to protect pedestrians along transportation corridors and in parking lots.

### Why are Pedestrian Facilities Important?

The Surface Transportation Policy Project “Mean Streets 2002” Report places Baton Rouge at the top of the “Most Dangerous Metro Areas in Louisiana” regarding pedestrian safety. In 2001, of the 99 pedestrian traffic fatalities statewide, 20 occurred in the Baton Rouge area. Of the total traffic deaths in the Baton Rouge area, 15.4 percent were pedestrians.

### Fast Facts

Nearly one-third of Louisiana adults are obese, having a Body Mass Index of 30 or greater. Just over 60 percent of Louisiana residents are clinically overweight. Obesity related illnesses account for 48 percent of Louisiana's health care budget. (Louisiana Council on Obesity Prevention, 2002)

Research conducted in 1999 by the Center for Disease Control found that “obesity and overweight are linked to the nation's number one killer—heart disease—as well as diabetes and other chronic conditions.” The report also states that one reason for Americans' sedentary life-style is that “walking and cycling have been replaced by automobile travel for all but the shortest distances.”

(October 27, 1999 issue of the JAMA)

### Current Sidewalk Requirements

The Unified Development Code currently requires four inch thick, five foot wide sidewalks be constructed along both sides of all public and private subdivision streets. Streets which have lots on only one side may be allowed to have sidewalks along one side of the street when deemed appropriate and reasonable by the Planning Director. Sidewalks may also be required along officially designated major streets and along all other streets where deemed essential for the public safety.

## Growth Center Community Planning Process

The Growth Center Community Planning Process is one way to advocate healthy transportation in your community. Growth Center Community Planning meetings gave residents, patrons, and business owners an opportunity to participate in community planning for their community or regional growth center. Urban design guidelines relating to bike and pedestrian needs and landscape improvements are a particular focus of the program.

### For more information contact:

**City-Parish Planning Commission**  
1755 Florida Street, Third Floor  
P.O. Box 1471

**Baton Rouge, LA 70821**

**Telephone: (225) 389-3144 Fax: (225) 389-5342**

**Office Hours: 8 a.m.—5 p.m. M-F**

**Email: [planning@brgov.com](mailto:planning@brgov.com)**

**Web page: <http://www.brgov.com/dept/planning>**