

Pedestrian Master Plan Update

Executive Summary

2000 - Pedestrian Master Plan - Policy

In November 2000, the Austin City Council adopted resolution No. 001130-12, which approved the Pedestrian Master Plan. The Pedestrian Master Plan set “forth policies that will encourage walking as a viable mode of transportation, improve pedestrian safety and enable people to walk to and from transit stops”. Additionally, the Pedestrian Master Plan identified that “inclusion of sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities in the transportation system is necessary to help control air pollution and traffic congestion, and increase quality of life in Austin”.

2005 - Phase I - Infrastructure

Phase I of the Pedestrian Master Plan infrastructure component provided a start on gathering relevant data needed to prioritize City sidewalk projects. Phase I included the following components:

- Development of a Project Selection Matrix (the “Matrix”) for prioritizing new sidewalk projects
- GIS database development of existing and absent pedestrian infrastructure
- GIS based method for programmatically scoring and prioritizing project locations
- GPS based field assessment of sidewalks and curb ramps for American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS) compliance, and current maintenance condition

The study area for Phase I covered approximately 30% of the city and the field assessment covered approximately 1% of the city.

2007 - Phase II - Infrastructure

Phase II of the Pedestrian Master Plan Infrastructure component is critical to the Public Works Department to have a complete picture of ADA/TAS compliance. Phase II contains the following components:

- Completion of the pedestrian infrastructure inventory database to include all areas within the city limits
- Expanded GPS based field assessment to additional priority corridors including the Central Business District
- Expanded GIS layer functionality to include prioritization of sidewalk maintenance needs and ADA/TAS compliance status
- Development of a “map-quest” type pedestrian point-to-point routing system for accessible routes to allow the public to view sidewalk/accessible routes
- Update of the City of Austin American with Disabilities Act Transition Plan
- Develop methodology for maintenance of the GIS data; specifically how to capture sidewalk’s/curb ramps installed by private development
- Update and expansion of the Matrix

The study area for Phase II will cover 100% of the city and the field assessment will cover and additional 1% of the city.

Updated and Expanded Project Selection Matrix (see Exhibit A)

The new Matrix will be divided into five parts: Pedestrian Attractor Score (PAS), Neighborhood Plan Score, Private Funding Score, Pedestrian Risk Score (PRS), and Condition Score. The Neighborhood Plan and Condition Scores can add up to an additional 60 points to the base score and can only be used when comparing project within areas with adopted neighborhood plans and/or available field condition data. Additionally, public input for the matrix will be expanded to include the Mayor's Fitness Council, Austin Neighborhoods Council, Planning Commission, Zoning and Platting Commission, and the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities.

1. The Pedestrian Attractor Score, which is 50% of the base weight, is made up of five elements:
 - Proximity to pedestrian attractors such as schools, transit stops, government offices, etc. Points are awarded based on how many of these elements exist in a 1/8 or 1/4 mile buffer. This makes up 50% of the PAS score
 - Residential Population is based on the 2000 Census blocks and awards points based on the population within 1/2 mile buffer. This makes up 25% of the PAS score
 - Existing Facilities on Street awards points for arterial and collector streets if there are sidewalks on both sides or one side of the street, respectively This makes up 10% of the PAS score
 - Citizen/Organization Requests makes up 10% of the PAS score. Points are awarded if the sidewalk segment has been requested by either the ADA Task Force and/or a citizen request through the City 311 system
 - Bicycle Lanes awards points if there are bicycle lanes on both sides of the street. This makes up 5% of the PAS score
2. Neighborhood Request score is added to the base score based on the age of the adopted neighborhood plan. This is an additional score because not all neighborhoods have adopted a plan.
3. Private Funding Score is 10% of the base score. This score is awarded if fiscal posting exists for a portion of, or for the entire absent sidewalk segment.
4. Pedestrian Risk Score is 40% of the base score. This score looks at adjacent street characteristics, level of pedestrian activity, and public health data for the area. This score makes no judgment about existing infrastructure or faulty facilities.
 - Street Classification is 35% of the PRS Score. Streets with higher traffic volume and speed receive higher scores
 - Pedestrian/Automobile Accidents are 45% of the PRS score. Points are assigned due to the number of accidents in a 1/8 or 1/4 mile buffer of the sidewalk segment. The data is multiplied per occurrence; so locations with multiple accidents receive higher scores
 - Pedestrian Health Risk is 20% of the PRS score. Public health data is used to look at the rate of diseases ameliorated by walking. Points are awarded by high, medium, or low instances of diseases ameliorated by physical activity
5. Condition Score is only for existing sidewalk and is up to an additional 50 points to the base score. This score looks at the accessibility and maintenance of curb ramps and sidewalks.

Conclusion

Upon its completion, The Pedestrian Master Plan will have taken approximately three years to complete. It will provide guidance on creating an accessible and pedestrian friendly city. It will allow for prioritization and planning of future sidewalk projects and associated funding. Additionally, it will serve to assist development review planners to more easily assess pedestrian infrastructure when considering sidewalk variances and waivers.

The Project Selection Matrix represents input from various community stakeholders as well as City Boards and Commissions. Solicitation for input for the Matrix was also obtained by placing information at all City libraries and on the City of Austin Bicycle & Pedestrian Program website. Public input for the Matrix will take place May to August 2007. After all public input is gathered and assessed, City staff will present a final Matrix to the City Council for adoption as part of the Pedestrian Master Plan. The plan is scheduled to appear before the City Council for adoption in November or December 2007.

Lastly, the incorporation of public health data into the Matrix is progressive and consistent with a national trend in city planning which looks at the affect of the built environment on public health. The Public Works Department and the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department proudly partnered on this project.

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