

Regional Active Transportation Plan – Committee Meeting #2 July 14, 2022

Present:

Amanda Froeschle, VT Dept of Health
Jonathon Weber, Local Motion
Lauren Chicote, Winooski Valley Park District
Matthew Arancio, VTrans
Lauren Chicote, WVPD

Project team:

CCRPC: Eleni Churchill, Bryan Davis, Marshall Distel
Toole Design: Michael Blau, Lucy Gibson

Welcome and introductions

Ice breaker – last time you walked in 90+ degree weather

Equity Analysis

Toole described the equity analysis which examined racial and other disparities in Chittenden County through several lenses:

- A qualitative review of the historical inequities in the county, with a focus on urban renewal, highway construction, public housing, and deindustrialization;
- An overview of current policies and trends that continue to cause inequities, such as police harassment and racial profiling; and
- A quantitative spatial analysis of different equity indicators including poverty, race, age (seniors and youth), vehicle ownership (see bullets), immigrants, limited English proficiency, and limited education attainment.

The memo describes key takeaways about the disparities in income, transportation access and cost, and environmental conditions throughout the county including:

- Chittenden County is growing more diverse thanks to new residents.
- Police harassment and racial profiling is a problem for Black motorists and possibly for active transportation users.
- Decisionmakers must listen to residents' priorities for better housing, education, etc., that may be more urgent and impactful than an active transportation project.

Discussion:

- Jonathon – for the chart on data on growth in bicycling by race national or Chittenden County data? National. It would also be interesting to see the same graph by income level. For the data on harassment and racial profiling of active transportation users, is the data not being collected when stops are made, or is it the data doesn't exist but isn't being analyzed or isn't accessible? In Michael's experience, and this is some conjecture, my guess is that the data isn't being collected unless there's a concerted effort to capture that information. In most communities it goes unreported unless people know otherwise in Chittenden County, but by and large that data isn't available in most communities. If it is it's often anecdotal or centered on a high profile case and other instances arise to show it's a systemic problem. There are a few communities I've worked in that have more comprehensive data sets but that's generally not the case.

- Amanda likes that youth were included as population of focus and notes that is a strength. Important that healthy active choices are an option like art, sports. Michael adds that more insights could be added if desired. Amanda notes that Connecting Cultures was having problems getting kids to camps, transportation was an issue, could build on that. Michael notes this could be expanded in the final report.

Bicycle Network Analysis

This work starts with a Level of Traffic Stress analysis, identifies bicycle facilities that are comfortable for all riders. Factors include traffic speeds (based on speed limit or prevailing speed if available), traffic volumes, number of travel lanes, existing bicycle facilities, etc. Next step is census block to block analysis of connectivity between them. This is followed by aggregating destinations, meaning: are there places that people would walk/bike to. This creates a baseline Bicycle Network Analysis (BNA). Toole will then analyze different scenarios, one of which will be a countywide equity scenario, and a second will be Route 2 from Burlington to Williston. The equity analysis will identify environmental justice areas using race, poverty, and commute mode indicators, select high stress links in those areas, identify links where protected facilities are a priority, then convert those high stress links to low stress and rerun the BNA to see potential outcomes.

Jonathon – were there two versions of the BNA in the memo? Michael – yes, first analysis captures destinations on both high and low stress networks, and then the analysis is run again to focus on destinations accessible on the low stress network. The second version will be used going forward.

Trip Potential Analysis

First decide which origin-destination (O-D) pairs to analyze, determine a realistic maximum distance for walking and biking, and then assign an appropriate weighting for each O-D pair. The index is then calculated by iterating over origin and destination pairs, drawing a straight line connecting the two, and then applying a value to the connection, with a decay factor applied as distance from the straight line connection increases, which is similar to a heat map effect.

The countywide bicycle trip potential results confirm what we may intuitively surmise (i.e., Burlington area has higher bike potential than outlying areas). These results will be combined with the BNA scenario planning in a subsequent task to identify routes for better bicycling along higher trip potential corridors in and out of Burlington and elsewhere in the county where trip potential is high.

The initial countywide pedestrian trip potential results showed very high values for Burlington due to the large number of destinations there. The Burlington values are so high that it overshadows the rest of the region, which appears to have no trip potential. We applied a logarithmic rescaling factor which suppresses the effect of some of the very high values, and the results from outside the Burlington area are more observable.

Milton and South Burlington were selected for local walking trip potential analysis because they are two of the fastest growing communities in the state (according to US Census data 2010 and 2020), both are home to populations historically excluded from the planning process, and neither has an adopted comprehensive walk/bike plan. Note, however, that South Burlington has an active Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee which successfully advances active transportation projects in the City, and Milton has an adopted Recreation Master Plan that includes active transportation facilities and calls for the development of an active transportation plan that comprehensively considers walking, biking and trail connectivity in Milton.

Amanda – do any destinations include grocery stores or food centers? Is that captured in any of the destinations? Michael will check with data analyst, might be included in commercial type or services and points out that grocery stores are included in the Bicycle Network Analysis under Core Services, along with healthcare, social services, etc.

Jonathon – these are helpful by showing trips that are being taken by people who don't have an option. Matthew agrees to show potential if conditions are changed to make walking/biking more comfortable.

Unpaved trail analysis

We want walking and biking to be accessible, and paved trails or on road facilities may not be an option in some places so we wanted to consider if unpaved trails could be an option to connect places or fill a more immediate need to close some gaps. Included 2021 Strava data but the caveat is that this is a select user group so doesn't include a lot of the population or user groups.

Jonathon – so this map is only showing where use is happening, not necessarily where connections could be? Correct. Jonathon notes that Strava won't show less used trails that could serve as connections, like those in Charlotte. Michael notes that online web map comments could also show desired connections in other areas. Jonathon – in future would be helpful to see if there are sections of the VAST trail or other networks. Bryan notes that we may ask committee and other walk/bike/trail groups to ground-truth routes and potential options. This also doesn't include paved path networks but those could also be part of a connected off road network. Lauren suggests filtering Strava data by trip type (recreation vs commute). This task is in progress and we will get input from local trail committees.

Task 4: Recommendations

Toole will now start to combine the analysis results with planned projects and public input to create a preliminary countywide active transportation network. This will also include program and policy recommendations including Land use strategies, New mobility/bikeshare, Safe Routes to School, Complete Streets, Vision Zero, Public Relation campaigns.

Public feedback update

Bryan provided an update on public outreach efforts. The team held 7 listening sessions, collected more than 330 comments from the online map, received more than 40 emails, had informal conversations with people at popular gathering spots, asked transportation partners to promote in their networks, and CCRPC shared in its newsletters, posts on Front Porch Forum, website updates, and email blasts to project contact database. An initial review of comments revealed general themes including making network connections and closing system gaps, intersections can be challenging, lack of roadway and facility maintenance, traffic speeds and volumes, driver behavior, and desire for more protection (buffers or separation). The team will continue to analyze comments and incorporate into developing recommendations.

Next steps

Committee members can make comments in the memos using the online link shared in the meeting email. Toole will begin working on recommendations and present to committee in late summer or early fall. The final plan will be complete by the end of the year. Jonathon suggests seeing what speed limit changes, like raising prevailing speeds in the LTS input data, to see what impacts on LTS results might be. Toole's data analyst provided some insight into why they don't suggest this process.