

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN	E.1
WHY WE NEED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION	E.2
KEY FINDINGS	E.3
PRIORITY ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	E.4

E.1 ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN

The Laredo & Webb County Active Transportation Plan (*Active Transportation Plan* or the *Plan*) is a collaborative effort undertaken by the Laredo-Webb County Area Metropolitan Organization (LW-CAMPO) to create and develop connectivity between bicycle, pedestrian, and transit networks.

A primary objective of the Plan is to enhance mobility in the region by providing safe, accessible, and alternate modes of transportation for the future of Laredo and Webb County citizens.

GOALS & THEMES

The goals of this Plan stem from previous planning efforts, specifically the 2017 Viva Laredo Comprehensive Plan and the 2020-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and are focused around four broad themes:

- Safety
- Connectivity
- Equity
- Accessibility

Goal 1: Create a connected network of Complete Streets that increase transit service and improve connectivity, walkability, bikeability, and economic benefits.

Goal 2: Enhance and connect the bike and pedestrian network so that it reduces service disparities and achieves equitable access to all types of facilities and transportation modes.

Goal 3: Expand bicycle facilities throughout Laredo to create a full network of connected, safe, and attractive bikeways and supporting facilities for both transportation and recreation.

Goal 4: Increase Metro Transit efficiency and provide high connectivity to other transportation modes to create the most utilized citywide transit system in the state and reduce service disparities.

PLAN LAYOUT

The Active Transportation Plan is organized into six chapters:

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

- Overview of active transportation and its benefits.
- Description of Plan’s vision and goals.

CHAPTER 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Analysis of local geography, traffic patterns, economic characteristics, and socioeconomic indicators.
- Analysis and findings of existing bicycle, pedestrian, and transit network.

CHAPTER 3: PUBLIC INPUT

- Overview of previous planning efforts and community engagement and stakeholder collaboration activities.
- Findings from public input activities and survey results.

CHAPTER 4: RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommended policies, programs, and projects.
- Maps showing proposed bike routes and proposed buildout network.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- List and map of prioritized projects for 10-Year bicycle network.
- Recommended funding and implementation strategies.

CHAPTER 6: COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

- Recommended Complete Streets Policy.

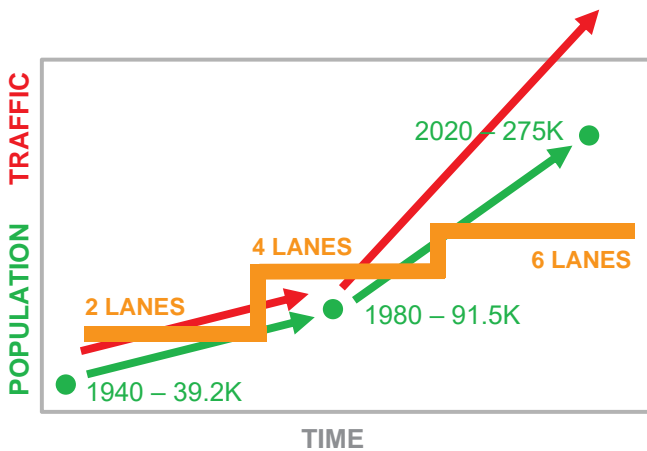
E.2 WHY WE NEED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

WHY WE NEED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

At a recent meeting in San Antonio, the Governor of Texas made a bold statement: "...the future of transportation lies in alternatives to traditional motor vehicle travel." The reason is simple, we cannot build our way out of congestion with more and bigger roads.

In 1940, the population of Laredo was 39.2 thousand people. Forty years later in 1980, Laredo's population roughly doubled to 91.5 thousand. After another forty years in 2020, the population of Laredo is estimated to have tripled to 275 thousand.

While Laredo's population growth over the last 80 years has been remarkable, its growth in vehicle traffic has



been exponential. One of the main reasons for this is that Laredoans, like most Americans, drive more today than ever. Over the years, significant public investments were made to build new roads and widen old ones. However, because of the cost and time involved, road construction has not kept up with demand. As a result, traffic congestion in Laredo has become a common occurrence.

But if the region had enough money and time to keep building more and bigger roads, could the traffic problems be solved? The experience of other cities in Texas demonstrates otherwise. The I-10 Katy Freeway in Houston has 26 lanes, and yet it remains among the most congested roadways in the State.



HISTORIC DOWNTOWN LAREDO STREETS - 2 LANES



MCIPHERSON ROAD - 4 LANES



I-10 IN HOUSTON - 26 LANES



“THE BOTTOM LINE IS THIS: THE WAY PEOPLE GET AROUND, THE WAY PEOPLE LIVE IS GOING TO CHANGE. AS A RESULT, THIS GENERATION OF ROADS THAT [WE’RE] IN CHARGE OF BUILDING IS PROBABLY THE LAST MAJOR BUILDOUT OF ROADS WE’LL HAVE IN THE STATE OF TEXAS, EVEN CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT TEXAS IS THE FASTEST-GROWING STATE IN AMERICA ...**THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION LIES IN ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL MOTOR VEHICLE TRAVEL.**”

GOV. GREG ABBOTT ADDRESSES THE ROTARY CLUB OF SAN ANTONIO, JANUARY 8, 2020

E.2 WHY WE NEED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

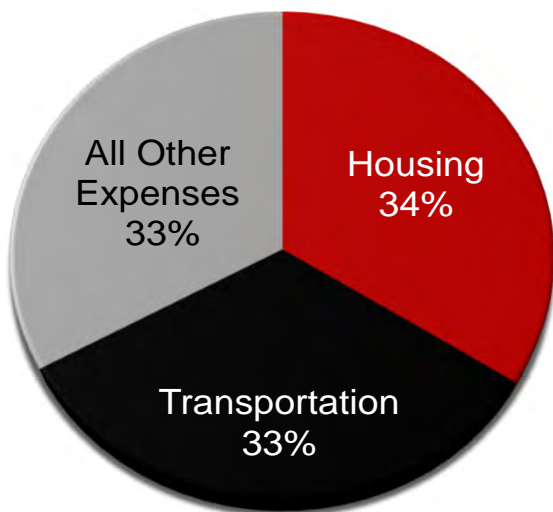
Active transportation systems support economic development by creating vibrant and connected communities with a high quality of life. Investments in active transportation can have significant benefits for businesses, commercial districts, homeowners, and customers. Walkability is associated with higher home values, bike share attracts customers to local businesses, trail users spend money on equipment, apparel, and food, and major employers are seeking to locate in walkable and bikeable cities.

Walkable communities that more easily connect residents to jobs can help improve upward economic mobility. Improving conditions for walking and biking can also have positive effects on local economies by providing opportunities to reduce household transportation costs, increase access to jobs, and increase property values. According to a national survey, 60% of adults in the U.S. favor walkable mixed-use neighborhoods, and almost two thirds of adults between 18 and 35

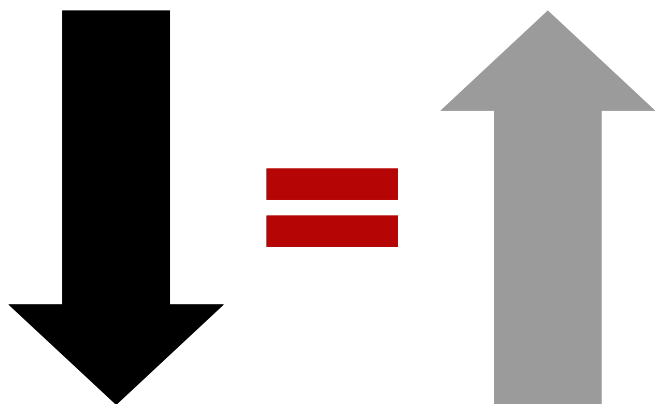
years of age report a desire to drive less if alternative transportation options were available.¹ In addition, bicycle infrastructure investments produce positive outcomes for communities regardless of differences in geographic factors such as climate, topography, and size.

A 2017 analysis of consumer spending compared expenditure patterns between California, New York, and Texas; the analysis shows transportation expenditures in Texas account for 20% as a share of total household expenditures, which is higher than both California (15%) and New York (14%), and higher than the national average (16%).²

For low income households in Webb County, transportation expenses make up nearly a third of all household costs. If residents can work, shop, and get around the region without a vehicle, they may choose to own fewer vehicles (or none at all). These savings will translate directly into more disposable income, which will increase personal wealth and local spending.



LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLD COSTS IN WEBB COUNTY



LOWER TRANSPORTATION COSTS

INCREASE DISPOSABLE INCOME

E.2 WHY WE NEED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION INCREASES PROPERTY VALUES

Living near bikeways and trails is an attractive option for many people looking to purchase or rent a home.³ Proximity to trails or other active transportation facilities directly correlates with an increase in property values.⁴ Property values increased nearly 80% to \$3.4 billion since the 2006 opening of the 3.5-mile Katy Trail in the Uptown neighborhood of Dallas, Texas.⁵

A study conducted in Bexar County, Texas, where San Antonio is located, found that homes near or abutting trails saw a 2% house price premium.⁶ An increase in property values also produces additional property tax revenues for local governments that invest in active transportation improvements.

NEW TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

Investment in active transportation facilities such as trails and on-street bike lanes can create new tourism opportunities. These facilities provide recreational activities for people already visiting Laredo such as shoppers from Mexico, truck drivers, and other visitors. A bike-friendly community with multiple recreational options for biking and walking can encourage return visits. Bicycle related events can be held with additional bicycle facilities, which can attract bicycle tourists.

TxDOT's Bicycle Tourism Study includes a summarized review of 11 existing studies on the daily expenditures of bicycle. The results revealed that bicycle tourists on average spend \$136 per day ranging from \$78 to \$275 per day in the cities they visit.⁷

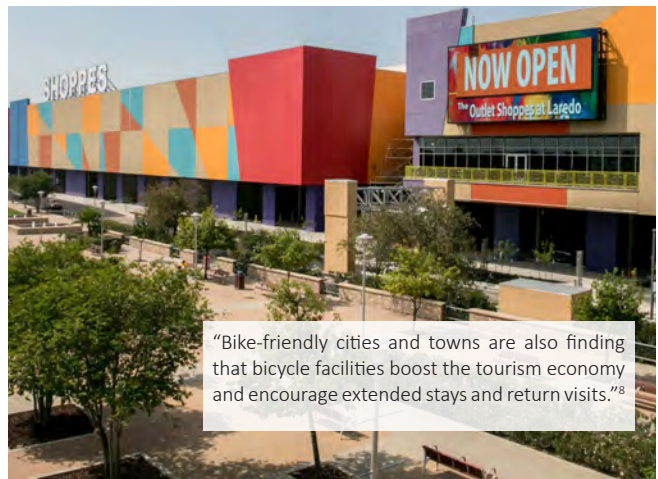
TALENT ATTRACTION

An efficient multi-modal transportation system that includes active transportation options with Complete Streets and bike lanes and trails for both recreation and daily transportation helps create a vibrant city that can attract workforce talent and new companies.



Property values increased nearly 80% to \$3.4 billion since the opening of the 3.5-mile Katy Trail in the Uptown neighborhood of Dallas.

KATY TRAIL IN DALLAS, TEXAS



"Bike-friendly cities and towns are also finding that bicycle facilities boost the tourism economy and encourage extended stays and return visits."⁸

OUTLET SHOPPES (SOURCE: LAREDO CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU)



"Towns of all sizes rely on active transportation as a contributor to quality of life and livability, both of which attract growing businesses—and educated talent to work for them."⁹

NORTH CENTRAL PARK

E.2 WHY WE NEED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

QUALITY OF LIFE

“Creating a more balanced transportation system through cost-effective investments offers the promise of improving quality of life of our people and the places in which they live” - National Recreation and Park Association.¹⁰

Active transportation increases quality of life for people of all ages and abilities. Providing residents with active transportation options benefits individuals through improved health, cost savings, and an overall better quality of life.¹¹

HEALTH

Prevalant chronic health conditions in Webb County include **heart disease , obesity, diabetes, and cancer.** A high prevalance of chronic diseases along with the region’s medical provider shortage, places Webb County residents in a vulnerable position.¹² Providing opportunities for physical activity and healthier lifestyle

choices can improve overall health in the community. Developing active transportation systems and focusing on mobility solutions based on alternative modes of transport can significantly increase opportunities for physical activity resulting in a healthier community and enhanced quality of life - helping people live longer, happier lives.

The obesity rate in Webb County is currently 38%.¹³ The lack of physical activity in the region has led to a high obesity rate and other chronic health issues. According to Rails to Trails Conservancy, the use of active transportation has a direct relationship with meeting physical activity guidelines set in the United States.

Active transportation increases physical activity, which helps decrease the risk of chronic disease and can help reduce both personal and national health care costs.¹⁴ It is necessary for the region to invest in active transportation and to increase access to trails, parks, and transit as a means for improving the region’s health and quality of life.



PLAYGROUND AT INDEPENDENCE HILLS PARK

E.3 KEY FINDINGS: SURVEY OF 1,925 LAREDOANS

Responses from the public survey distributed as part of the planning process and feedback from community engagement activities resulted in the following key findings:

- Residents would ride more often with safe bike infrastructure such as protected bike lanes.
- Many residents do not own a bicycle; implementing a Bike Share program would make bicycles more available.
- Several residents indicated they do not know how to ride a bicycle; highlighting an opportunity to initiate educational programs.
- Most residents were not able to guess the number of bicycle amenities; existing bicycle lanes and trails need to be easier to find and access.



GATHERING INPUT ACROSS THE CITY

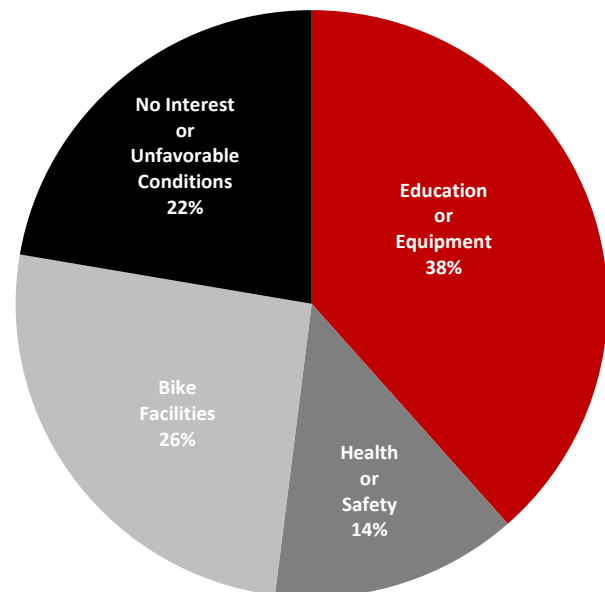
OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO ENCOURAGE MORE BIKE RIDING

Residents who indicated they never ride bicycles were asked to elaborate as to the reasons why. This open-ended question generated a variety of responses, which were categorized into 4 themes with challenges and opportunities:

- **Education or Equipment- Challenge:** Many residents never learned to ride a bicycle or do not own a bicycle. *Opportunity:* Engage and educate residents and provide easy access to bicycles.
- **Bike Facilities- Challenge:** Residents said there are not sufficient or adequate bike lanes available in the community. *Opportunity:* Enhance existing bicycle lanes and trails and expand availability.
- **Health or Safety- Challenge:** Residents expressed concerns about the safety of riding bicycles on local streets. *Opportunity:* Address safety concerns through the careful design of bike lanes and develop a connected off-street bike trail system.
- **No Interest or Unfavorable Conditions- Challenge:** Some residents said they are currently not interested in riding a bicycle or cited factors

such as weather as a reason for not riding.

Opportunity: Promote bike riding and generate new community interest.



REASONS THAT RESIDENTS ARE NOT RIDING BICYCLES

E.3 KEY FINDINGS: SURVEY OF 1,925 LAREDOANS

RESIDENTS WANT WELL CONNECTED SIDEWALKS

98% believe sidewalks should be required when connecting neighborhoods



RESIDENTS SUPPORT BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

87% believe bicycle lanes should be required



RESIDENTS WANT SAFE BIKE INFRASTRUCTURE

82% indicated they would ride more often with protected bike lanes



WHAT RESIDENTS SAID ABOUT BIKE RIDING

Survey respondents who indicated they never ride a bicycle were asked to specify why not. Safety concerns, lack of bicycle lanes, and not owning a bike are primary reasons people do not currently ride bikes in the area.

- *“Not many sidewalks or ‘safe’ areas to ride. Would definitely ride my bike more often if there were safer ways to use it for grocery shopping, and visiting other locations. There are no ‘safe’ areas by main roads such as Mcpherson, Saunders, Clark, Arkansas, etc.”*
- *“I never ride because it is dangerous and hot.”*
- *“Cars drive too fast and carelessly in my area even with such a short commute to work.”*
- *“Minimal bike lanes prohibit us from biking more often, particularly with my children’s safety in mind.”*
- *“I currently do not own a bicycle, but almost everyday I go for a walk with my family (5 or 6 in total), and we enjoy walking here in Laredo. Walking trails through the city would be awesome to have here. I live near to TAMIU, and I would probably sometimes walk to college if there was a walking trail to it.”*
- *“I was never taught how to ride a bicycle, but I do wish to learn how to one day.”*
- *“I would ride more if streets were safer.”*

THE PUBLIC SURVEY PROVIDED MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK FROM **1,925 RESIDENTS**. THE SURVEY RESULTS SHOW THAT RESIDENTS ARE INTERESTED IN BICYCLING MORE OFTEN AND SHOW A STRONG DESIRE FOR THE EXPANSION OF PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE.

E.3 KEY FINDINGS: NETWORK ANALYSIS

NETWORK ANALYSIS FINDINGS

The network analysis results found there is a strong demand for alternative modes of transport in the region. Additionally, the analysis resulted in these key takeaways:

- Three major sources for active transportation are international travelers who cross Bridge I on foot or bicycle, lower-income households without a vehicle, and residents who want more recreational amenities for fun and exercise
- The existing bicycle and pedestrian network is disconnected, not well advertised, and not very accessible
- There is an immediate need for safety enhancements and more inclusive street design that accommodates all users

BIKEWAYS

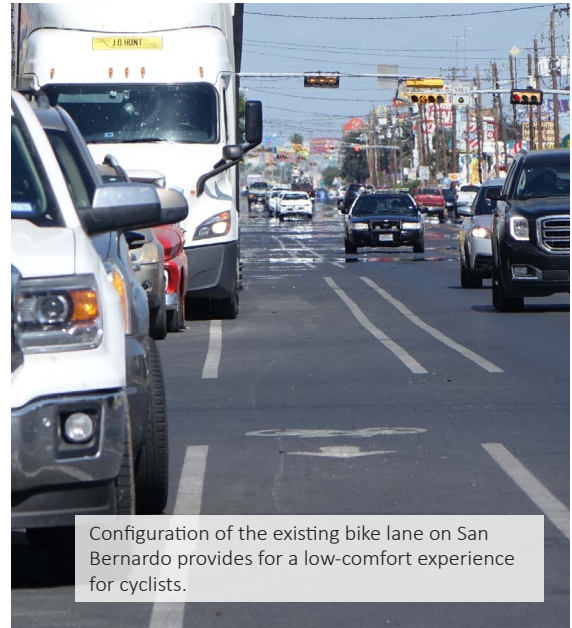
Currently, Laredo has 52 miles of bikeways throughout the City, with only 35 miles on a paved surface. The remaining miles consist of unpaved or un-dedicated facilities, mostly used for recreation (i.e. mountain biking). On-street bicycle lanes are sparse and unsafe. The existing bicycle network is highly disconnected—the longest connected route being only four miles long.

SIDEWALKS

Laredo’s existing sidewalk network is inconsistent throughout the region and many sections are in disrepair or non-existent. Additionally, many sidewalks are not accessible due to obstructions such as cars, utility poles, signs, and poorly placed trees.

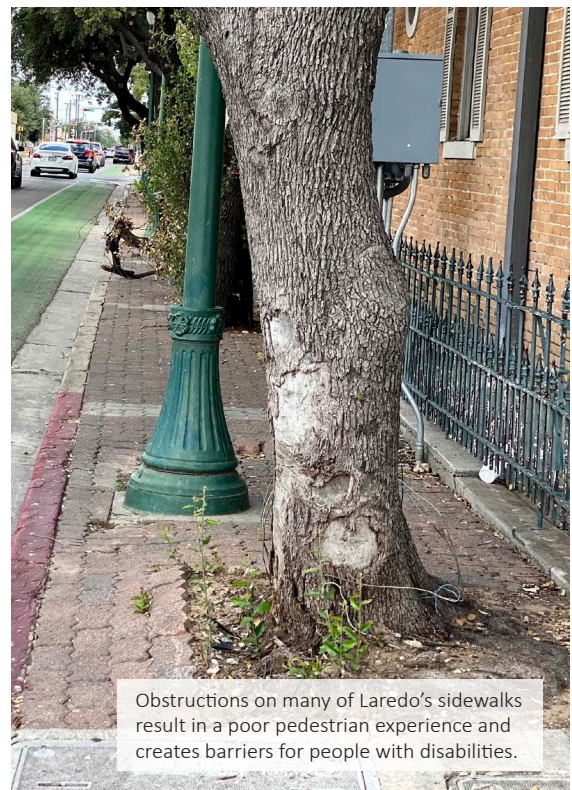
TRANSIT & MICROMOBILITY

The bus systems in the region are well utilized, with a large share of the demand coming from workers and shoppers who cross into Laredo on Bridge I. But ridership from the resident population could increase significantly if “last-mile” connections were improved. This can be done with more connected routes, bicycle and scooter rentals, and enhanced wayfinding.



Configuration of the existing bike lane on San Bernardo provides for a low-comfort experience for cyclists.

BIKE LANES ON SAN BERNARDO AVE



Obstructions on many of Laredo’s sidewalks result in a poor pedestrian experience and creates barriers for people with disabilities.

SIDEWALK OBSTRUCTIONS ON CONVENT AVE.

E.4 PRIORITY ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

PRIORITY ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Active Transportation Plan includes a total of 43 program and policy recommendations. Additionally, a total of 29 bicycle facility projects consisting of 40 connected miles are recommended to be built within the first 10 years. To ensure the Plan’s implementation several strategies and actions are detailed in the Plan. The following set of priority actions are vitally important to ensure that the Plan’s vision is realized and to build and sustain ongoing support for Active Transportation in the region.

INITIATE A BIKE SHARE PROGRAM

- Bike Share can help expand connections to transit, which is essential to developing an efficient and well-connected active transportation network.

PERFORM A SIDEWALK GAP ANALYSIS

- Perform a gap analysis of the existing sidewalk network and make strategic improvements based on an approved timeline and criteria. This is necessary to create a pedestrian-friendly environment throughout the region.

ENHANCE WAYFINDING

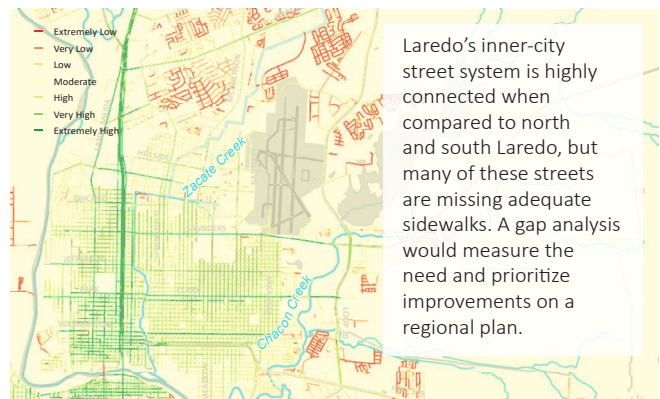
- Create highly visible signage along the active transportation network to increase route awareness and familiarize users with the network.

SECURE FUNDING FOR 10-YEAR NETWORK

- The proposed 10-year bicycle network is estimated to cost between \$15.9 million and \$19.2 million. A secure funding source is needed to ensure that the projects are implemented within 10 years and that at least 4 miles of the network are constructed annually. This will ensure a highly connected bicycle network of over 70 connected miles in 10 years, providing safe transportation and access to important destinations.



THE REGION NEEDS IMPROVED BICYCLE FACILITIES



THE REGION NEEDS A SIDEWALK GAP ANALYSIS

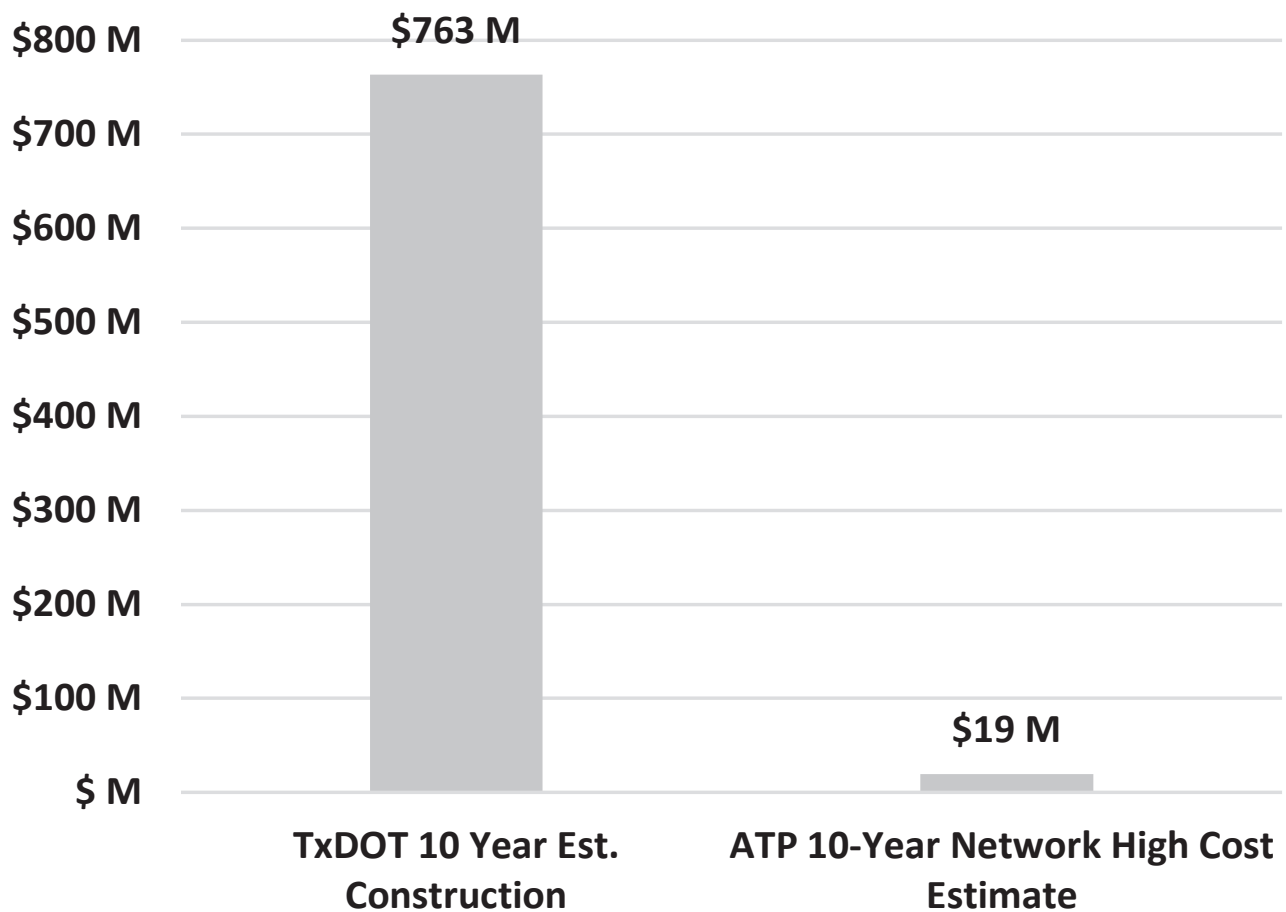


THE REGION NEEDS ENHANCED WAYFINDING

E.4 PRIORITY ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

WE NEED TO FUND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION MOBILITY PROJECTS

- It is essential to reconsider how we think about funding transportation if we want to create an effective system that provides efficient, safe, and sustainable mobility options for residents of all ages and abilities.
- We can fund the proposed 10-year network, which will cost approximately **\$19.2 million** (high estimate), with only **3%** of what TxDOT will spend in Webb County in the next 10 years.
- We can fund the complete proposed network (all phases over 20+ years), which will cost approximately **\$70.4 million** (high estimate), with only **9%** of what TxDOT will spend in Webb County in the next 10 years.



COMPARISON BETWEEN TxDOT AND ATP 10 YEAR ESTIMATED PROJECT COSTS IN WEBB COUNTY
(NOTE: TxDOT DATA RETRIEVED FROM PROJECT TRACKER)¹⁵

E.5 PRIORITY ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

PROPOSED BICYCLE NETWORK

The implementation of the Plan and proposed bicycle network is phased over more than 20 years. Implementation Phases include:

- Phase I: 10-Year Network (29 projects; 40 miles)
- Phase II: 20-Year Network (42 projects; 55 miles)
- Phase III: Buildout Network (43 projects; 89 miles)

Projects considered high priority are proposed to be developed within the first 10 years after Plan adoption. Implementing the Plan and proposed network will require multiple funding strategies and strategic collaboration between several entities and key stakeholders.

ACHIEVING THE VISION

Achieving the Plan’s Vision and effectively implementing the outlined recommendations and projects will depend on a series of strategies and actions consisting of the following:

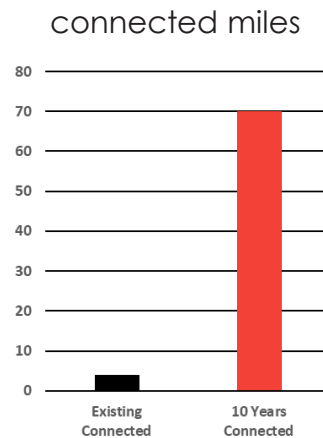
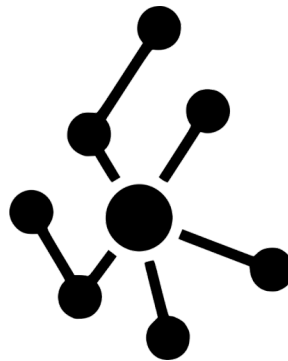
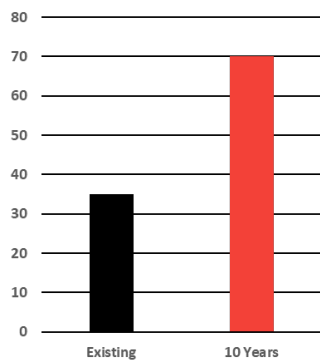
- Construct at least 4 miles of bike paths per year
- Plan update every 3 to 5 years
- Utilize various funding strategies
- Create the Active Transportation Sub-Committee of the MPO
- Adopt a Complete Streets Policy
- Prepare an Annual Strategic Report
- Monitor performance measures

double CONNECT multiply

x2

only add connections

x16



CURRENTLY LAREDO HAS 35 MILES OF BIKE PATHS, BUT BECAUSE THEY ARE ALL DISCONNECTED THE LONGEST YOU CAN RIDE ON ONE PATH IS ONLY 4 MILES. IN 10 YEARS IF WE DOUBLE THE TOTAL MILES OF BIKE PATHS FROM 35 TO 70 MILES, **BUT ONLY WITH CONNECTIONS**, WE WILL MULTIPLY OUR LONGEST CONNECTED ROUTE 16 TIMES. THE LONGEST CONNECTION WILL GO FROM 4 MILES TO 70 MILES. **LAREDO DOES NOT NEED MORE DISCONNECTED BIKE PATHS, WE NEED MORE CONNECTIONS.**

PROPOSED COMPLETE BICYCLE NETWORK

Existing & Projected Network

- On-Street
- ⋯ Off-Street

Proposed Projects next 10yrs

- On-Street
- ⋯ Off-Street

Proposed Projects next 20yrs

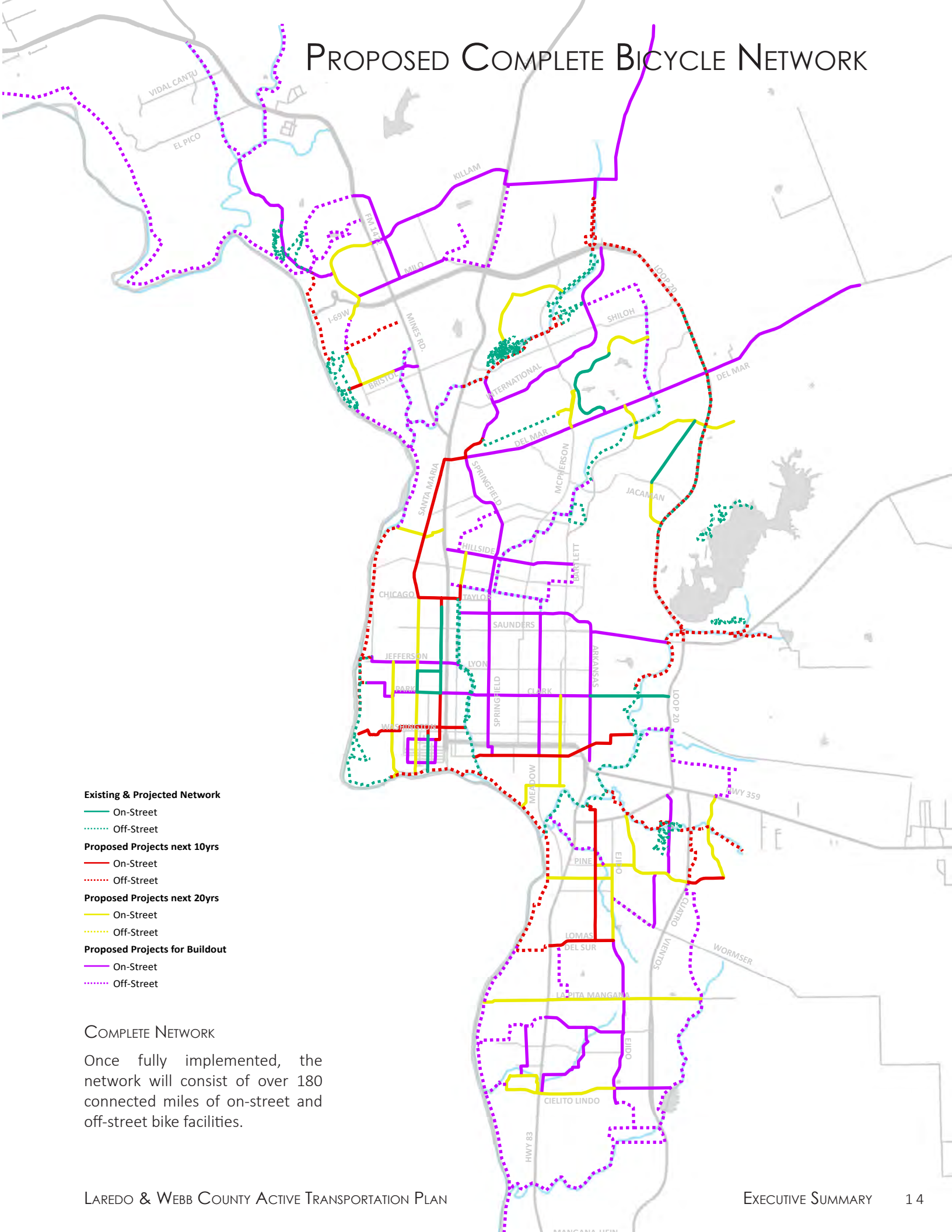
- On-Street
- ⋯ Off-Street

Proposed Projects for Buildout

- On-Street
- ⋯ Off-Street

COMPLETE NETWORK

Once fully implemented, the network will consist of over 180 connected miles of on-street and off-street bike facilities.





Bernie Chapa is a subcontractor and is a bike shop owner for the past 15 years. He has been biking for over 25 years and was the individual that built Shiloh Trails from the beginning. Mr. Chapa has been biking at Dryden Memorial Park for almost 20 years and has been a strong biking advocate for decades. He enjoys biking because it's natural for him, contains a lot of health benefits, and above all fun.

When asked about how his experience could be improved, Mr. Chapa stated, "One of the main things is driver education, to make cyclists more comfortable, more safe out there on the road."



ENDNOTES

- 1 National Association of Realtors. (2013). Community Preference Survey. <https://cdn.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/reports/2013/2013-community-preference-analysis-slides.pdf>
- 2 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017). <https://www.bls.gov/opub/btn/volume-8/consumer-spending-ca-tx-ny.htm>
- 3 Texas Department of Transportation. (2018). Texas Bicycle Tourism Trails Study: Final Report. pg 21. <https://ftp.txdot.gov/pub/txdot-info/ptn/btts-final-report.pdf>
- 4 Torsha Bhattacharya, Ph.D.; Kevin Mills, J.D.; and Tiffany Mulally, Ph.D. (2019). Active Transportation Transforms America: The Case for Increased Public Investment in Walking and Biking Connectivity. Washington, D.C., Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. https://www.railstotrails.org/media/869945/activetransport_2019-report_final_reduced.pdf
- 5 Urban Land Institute. (2016). Active Transportation and Real Estate: The Next Frontier. Washington, D.C., the Urban Land Institute. <http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Active-Transportation-and-Real-Estate-The-Next-Frontier.pdf>
- 6 Texas Department of Transportation. (2018). Texas Bicycle Tourism Trails Study: Final Report. pg 21. <https://ftp.txdot.gov/pub/txdot-info/ptn/btts-final-report.pdf>
- 7 Texas Department of Transportation. (2018). Texas Bicycle Tourism Trails Study: Final Report. pg 20. <https://ftp.txdot.gov/pub/txdot-info/ptn/btts-final-report.pdf>
- 8 Urban Land Institute. (2016). Active Transportation and Real Estate: The Next Frontier. Washington, D.C., the Urban Land Institute. <http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Active-Transportation-and-Real-Estate-The-Next-Frontier.pdf>
- 9 Torsha Bhattacharya, Ph.D.; Kevin Mills, J.D.; and Tiffany Mulally, Ph.D. (2019). Active Transportation Transforms America: The Case for Increased Public Investment in Walking and Biking Connectivity. Washington, D.C. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. https://www.railstotrails.org/media/869945/activetransport_2019-report_final_reduced.pdf
- 10 National Recreation and Park Association. Active Transportation and Parks and Recreation. https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/f768428a39aa4035ae55b2aaff372617/activetransportation_final.high.pdf
- 11 Torsha Bhattacharya, Ph.D.; Kevin Mills, J.D.; and Tiffany Mulally, Ph.D. (2019). Active Transportation Transforms America: The Case for Increased Public Investment in Walking and Biking Connectivity. Washington, D.C. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. https://www.railstotrails.org/media/869945/activetransport_2019-report_final_reduced.pdf
- 12 Regional Healthcare Partnership 20. Community Needs Assessment. <http://www.webbcountytx.gov/IndigentHealthCare/CommunityNeedsAssessment/2018-CommunityNeedsAssesment-RHP20.pdf>
- 13 Healthiest Communities Rankings 2020. <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/texas/webb-county>
- 14 Torsha Bhattacharya, Ph.D.; Kevin Mills, J.D.; and Tiffany Mulally, Ph.D. (2019). Active Transportation Transforms America: The Case for Increased Public Investment in Walking and Biking Connectivity. Washington, D.C. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. https://www.railstotrails.org/media/869945/activetransport_2019-report_final_reduced.pdf
- 15 Texas Department of Transportation. Project Tracker. https://apps3.txdot.gov/apps-cq/project_tracker/#