

3

PUBLIC INPUT

EXISTING PLANS & RELEVANT DOCUMENTS	3.1
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	3.2
STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION	3.3
PUBLIC SURVEY	3.4

3.1 EXISTING PLANS & RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Public and stakeholder involvement was critical to the development of the Active Transportation Plan. The Plan received various contributions from the public through multiple avenues such as community engagement efforts, stakeholder collaboration, public surveys, and outreach.

Public input was sought to better understand the experience of people currently using active transportation in Laredo, as well as barriers that discourage or prevent people from using active transportation. Input from the public and stakeholders directly impacted the Active Transportation Plan's network routes, trail alignments, project prioritization, and recommended policies.

To inform the development of the Plan, the first round of public engagement ran during the initial stages of the project, between February 2020 to March 2020. A second engagement round sought stakeholder feedback on the draft recommendations of the plan from July 2020 to September 2020.

3.1 EXISTING PLANS & RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

The Active Transportation Plan builds on the City's existing planning documents and recent progress. Implementing walking, bicycling, and trail networks requires coordination with various agencies and stakeholders. The development of the Active Transportation Plan included coordination with several concurrent planning efforts and the document builds upon previous planning efforts. The following table shows the list of plans and studies that were consulted in development of the Active Transportation Plan.

EXISTING PLANS, STUDIES, PROJECTS, AND POLICIES

<i>Plan Name</i>	<i>Year</i>
Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan	1994
Parks & Open Space Master Plan	2008
Rio Grande Vega Lands Master Plan	2008
El Metro Transit Development Plan	2016
Viva Laredo - Comprehensive Plan	2017
Future Throughfare Plan	2017
Future Land Use Plan	2017
Laredo Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	2020
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	2020
<i>Project</i>	<i>Year</i>
River Road	2006
Rio Grande Vega Trail - Zacate to Chacon	2018
Upper Zacate Creek - Hike & Bike Trail Extension	2018
Chacon Creek Hike & Bike Trail Extension	2019
Safe Routes to School - Projects	2019
WCDD - Trails in East Laredo	2019
East Chacon Creek Connection	2020
<i>Policy</i>	<i>Year</i>
Green Space Ordinance	2004
Park Dedication Ordinance	2008
Joey Muñoz Safe Passage Ordinance	2016
Vision Zero	2019
<i>Study</i>	<i>Year</i>
Bike Feasibility Study	1975
Laredo Downtown Circulation Study - Traffic Engineers	1997
Bus Rapid Transit - BRT Study	2011
MPO - Congestion & Delay Study	2015
Opportunity Map - Harvard-Bloomberg Partnership	2017
FM 1472 - Bike Lane	2017
Bicycle Friendly Community - Report Card	2018
Downtown Parking Study	2019
RMA - North Laredo Study	2020
<i>Additional Resources</i>	<i>Year</i>
Bicycle Safety Workshop	2017
Laredo Bike Plan - Map	2017
Bike Network Map	2017

3.1 EXISTING PLANS & RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

3.1.1 VIVA LAREDO - COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2017)

“Towns and cities throughout the country are in the process of restoring old neighborhoods and creating new neighborhoods that are both walkable and accessible. Strategies that make Laredo easier to navigate as a pedestrian (or cyclist) will also make the City more livable and attractive.” - Viva Laredo Plan

Viva Laredo is the City of Laredo’s Comprehensive Plan, which outlines goals and policies to guide the City’s physical and economic development. Viva Laredo dedicates an entire chapter to mobility. The Mobility chapter of Viva Laredo presents an evaluation of the multi-modal transportation system’s mobility, accessibility, and connectivity within the City of Laredo. Expanding active transportation opportunities and accessibility is a key strategy of the Viva Laredo’s mobility element.

The Viva Laredo plan states, “Laredo has the potential to become a premier bicycling destination through strategic policy changes and infrastructure investments.”

3.1.2 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2020)

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the comprehensive, multimodal, and coordinated transportation plan for the Laredo metropolitan area. As such, the MTP seeks to promote strategies for operating, maintaining, managing, building, and financing the transportation network in order to advance the region’s long-term goals and overall quality of life. The MTP identifies policies, programs and projects for each mode of travel including roadways, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian facilities, aviation, rail, and freight movement that will be necessary to meet the region’s transportation needs through the year 2045. Essentially, the MTP serves as a guide and blueprint for transportation improvements and investments in the Laredo region for the next 25 years.

Over the past 25 years our MTP has promoted

and encouraged the development of a connected community. The creekways have been proposed as the main stems of our system:

- 1995- 2005 = Rio Grande & Zacate Creek
- 2005- 2015 = Chacon Creek & Manadas Creek
- 2015- 2020 = Extending/Completing the Network

3.1.3 HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2017)

This plan outlines the highest populations in need of transportation based on various factors. It focuses on areas around the Webb County region to enhance alternative modes of transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities based on population and socioeconomic factors. This plan was produced in February 2017.

3.1.4 LAREDO BICYCLE PLAN (1994)

The City’s last bicycle specific plan was released in 1994. The plan supported providing safe, convenient, and adequate biking facilities.

Quote from the 1994 Laredo Bicycle Plan:

“It is the combined belief by the City of Laredo and TxDOT to provide safe, convenient, and adequate facilities to encourage non-motorized travel throughout the City of Laredo while reducing energy consumption and air pollution. It is also the combined philosophy of the City of Laredo and TxDOT that the result of proper planning is economic development. Therefore, we feel that a properly developed bicycle and pedestrian transportation master plan will not only provide a cleaner and healthier environment for its citizens and visitors, but also encourage economic development.”

3.1.5 RMA NORTH LAREDO TRANSPORTATION STUDY

The proposed plan outlines complete streets to be built in the industrial sector in North Laredo, providing



3.1 EXISTING PLANS & RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

access to both residents and visitors to the pedestrian and bikeway networks.

Quote from the RMA North Laredo Transportation Study:

“In some locations, protected bike lanes make sense, though in most cases, bikes can be accommodated using a shared-use path, which is essentially a 10-foot wide sidewalk that can be shared by a mix of cyclists and pedestrians and can facilitate passing when bikes are traveling in opposite directions. Pedestrian lighting should also be included as part of this improvement. Connectivity across the interstates need to be facilitated with any new interchanges.”

3.1.6 OTHER PLANS, STUDIES, AND POLICIES

BIKE FEASIBILITY STUDY (1975)

According to the Bike Feasibility Study, “In the case of the bicycle, we reach back to a form of transportation which has been historically, in the United States, used as a means of recreation, as a way of travel for children to and from school, and in a few instances, as a necessary tool for earning one’s livelihood. The intention here will be to look to the use of the “bicycle” as a means of transportation with an emphasis on safety and efficiency for whichever purpose used; however, a trend toward increasing the potential use of the bike as a means of transporting the working person from his home to his job and back would be deemed promising.”

SAFE PASSAGE ORDINANCE - JOEY MUNOZ (2016)

This ordinance regulates safe distances between vehicles and vulnerable road users by requiring motor and commercial vehicle operators to maintain a distance of 3 feet and 6 feet when passing vulnerable road users.

CITY COUNCIL ADOPTION OF VISION ZERO (2019)

Vision Zero is based on an underlying ethical principle

that “it can never be ethically acceptable that people are killed or seriously injured when moving within the road transport system. In most road transport systems, road users bear complete responsibility for safety. Vision Zero changes this relationship by emphasizing that responsibility is shared by transportation system designers and road users”

GREEN SPACE ORDINANCE (2004)

The purpose of this ordinance is to establish minimal acceptable requirements for the design of buffers to protect the streams, wetlands and floodplains of Laredo. Additionally, the ordinance serves to protect the water courses, reservoirs, lakes, and other significant water resources in Laredo, and also protects Laredo’s riparian and aquatic ecosystems. The intent of the ordinance is to provide for the environmentally sound use of Laredo’s land.

PARK DEDICATION ORDINANCE (2008)

The Park Dedication Ordinance was adopted to provide recreational areas in the form of neighborhood parks as a function of site development in Laredo. The ordinance provides a mechanism to add new parkland through the dedication of land for park space in new residential development.



3.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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The City of Laredo hosted public meetings at community centers across town. Six “planning nights” provided the opportunity to listen and present to the community. The planning nights were held at community parks and recreation centers throughout the City. The format of the planning nights consisted of different stations focused on a variety of planning themes. At each station, planning staff shared future plans with community members and listened to their concerns and demands. Activities for kids were also provided at each planning night, which allowed City staff to engage with local youth about planning related topics and Laredo’s future. The goal was to visit all eight council districts within the City.

Public input received during the City’s planning nights, identified trails and pedestrian linkages to community resources as a top priority. Thus, the Plan goals and objectives prioritize the development of an interconnected network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and trails that link parks, schools, downtown Laredo, and other important community destinations.

Also, as part of the public input efforts, a series of resident profile interviews were conducted. Additional public input was collected through these semi-structured interviews held at multiple sites throughout the City. The residents interviewed each use at least one mode of active transportation for various reasons, whether it be biking to work, walking to the grocery store, riding transit to reach their destination, or biking for recreation. During the interviews, pictures and video footage were collected to help promote the Plan on social media and to include in the Plan document.

This Active Transportation Plan is informed by the community through public input and dialogue heard over several months. The feedback gathered through the public outreach activities helped develop the Plan’s recommendations and proposed routes that will create Laredo’s future active transportation system.



PLANNING NIGHT AT EL EDEN RECREATION CENTER



PLANNING NIGHT AT NORTH CENTRAL PARK

3.3 STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

3.3 STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Laredo is fortunate to have a broad coalition of stakeholders working together to make walking, cycling and transit options more accessible to all residents. Many stakeholder groups were identified early on in the project and targeted to share their ideas and insights on issues related to active transportation in Laredo.

Four presentations were provided to Walk.Bike.Ride Laredo, a key stakeholder group. Members of this stakeholder group were asked for feedback through a stakeholder survey. The survey asked members to rank the Plan's recommendations and allowed them the opportunity to provide additional input.

Presentations were also made to the MPO Technical Committee, MPO Policy Committee, and City of Laredo Planning & Zoning Commission. These stakeholders, including Walk.Bike.Ride Laredo, were asked to review and provide feedback on the Plan's recommendations and proposed network.

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

- Walk.Bike.Ride Laredo
- TxDOT
- Webb County
- El Metro Transit
- City Planning Department
- City Traffic Department
- City Engineering Department
- City Parks & Recreation Department
- City Environmental Services Department
- City Health Department
- Laredo Police Department
- Laredo Fire Department
- City of Laredo Planning & Zoning Commission
- MPO Policy Committee
- MPO Technical Committee



WALK.BIKE.RIDE LAREDO STAKEHOLDER GROUP

3.4 PUBLIC SURVEY

3.4 PUBLIC SURVEY

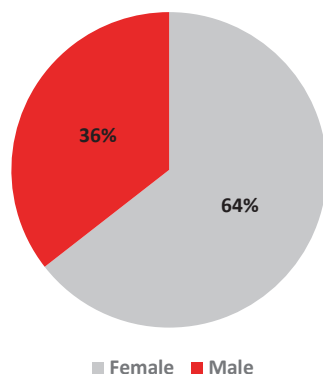
An online survey for the community at-large was conducted to gauge the public’s interest, use, and demand for active transportation, as well as to guide the direction and recommendations of this Plan. A total of 1,925 residents responded to the survey.

The survey consisted of a total of 28 questions and was available in both English and Spanish. The responses show a strong desire for the expansion of walking and cycling infrastructure that can be used by all ages and abilities. Improving safety and lighting is another priority identified through the survey. The complete survey results are included in the Appendix.

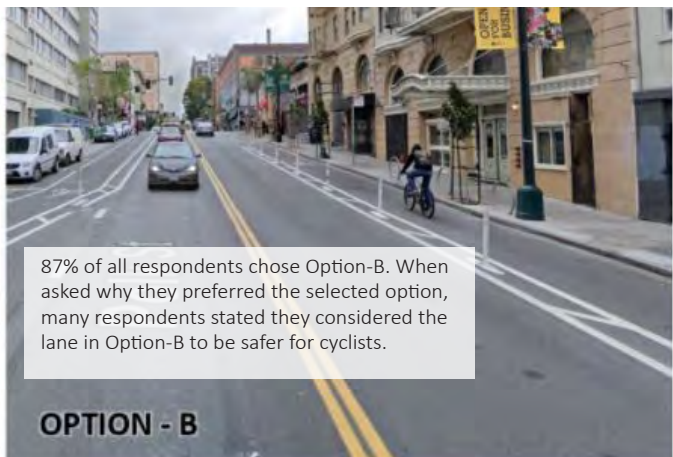
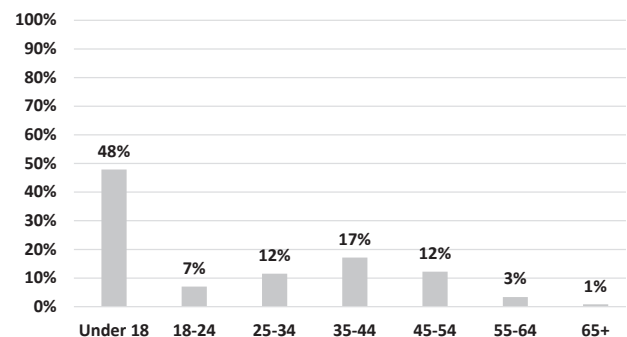
PUBLIC SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

- Even residents who do not currently ride bicycles want safe bike infrastructure.
- Safety is a primary reason residents do not bike in the community; if it was safer, the vast majority of Laredoans indicated they would ride more often.
- Most residents indicate Laredo winters are not too cold for bicycling; arguably three-fourths of the year has good, comfortable bicycling weather.
- Most residents were not able to guess the number of bike trails or lanes that exist in Laredo, indicating the need for wayfinding and marketing of bicycle amenities.

RESPONDENTS BY GENDER



RESPONDENTS BY AGE GROUP



RESPONDENTS WERE ABLE TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON STREET IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS

3.4 PUBLIC SURVEY

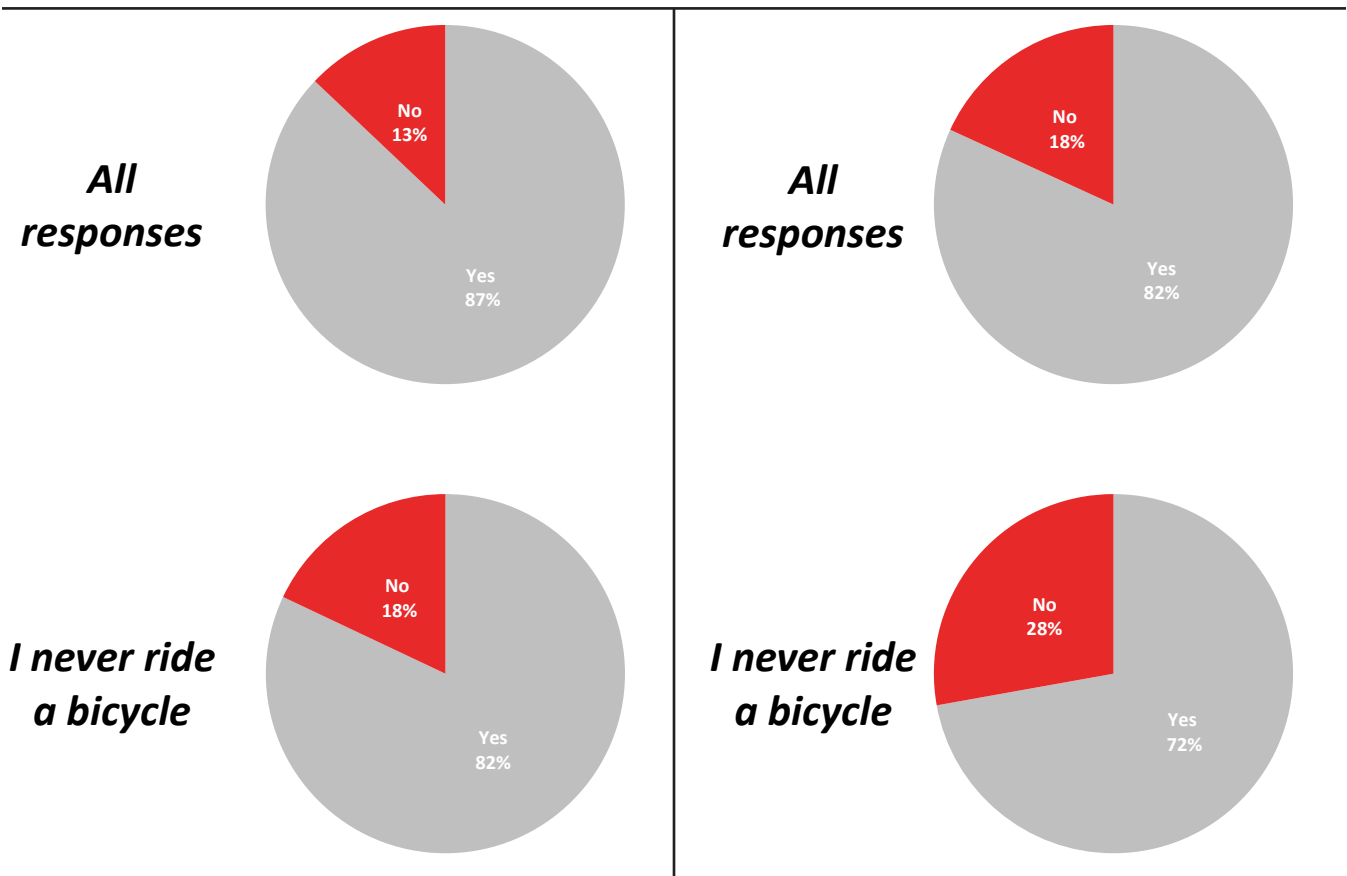
BIKE INFRASTRUCTURE QUESTIONS

Question #22 of the survey asked respondents if bicycle lanes should be required in new developments. A total of 87% respondents indicated that bicycle lanes should be required. When this question was filtered for people who never ride a bicycle, the result remained relatively steady with 82% of respondents who do not ride a bicycle still agreeing that bike lanes should be required.

Question #28 of the survey asked respondents if they would ride more often with protected bike lanes. A total of 82% respondents indicated they would ride more often with protected bike lanes. Again, filtering for people who never ride a bicycle, 72% of respondents still indicated that they would ride more often with protected bike lanes.

SHOULD BIKE LANES BE REQUIRED?

WOULD YOU RIDE MORE OFTEN
WITH PROTECTED BIKE LANES?



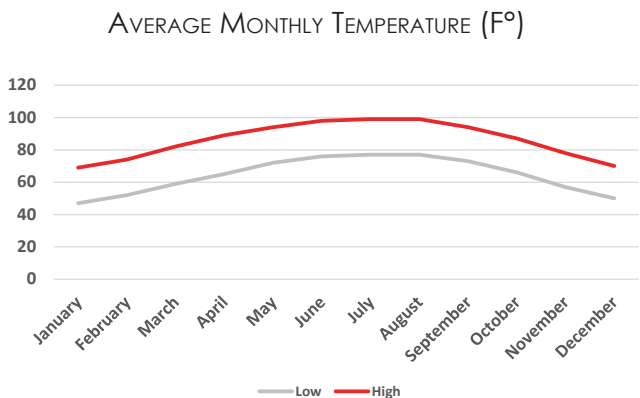
3.4 PUBLIC SURVEY

IS LAREDO TOO HOT FOR BIKING?

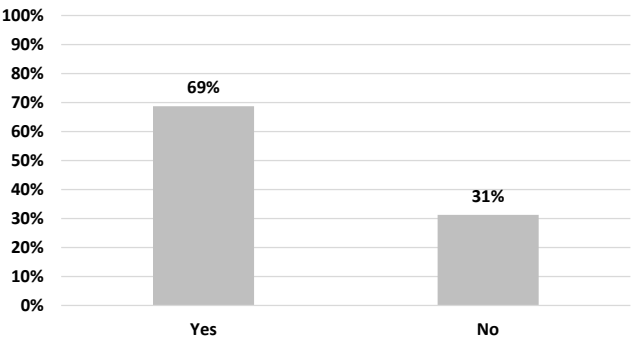
Based on feedback gathered from the public survey, public engagement activities, and discussions with stakeholders, a common theme among the reasons people do not ride bicycles in Laredo is the hot weather. However, the extremely high temperatures that make bike riding uncomfortable in Laredo only occur three months out of the year. During those months, bike riding is still enjoyable in the mornings and late evenings.

While a total of 69% of respondents agreed that it is “too hot” to ride a bicycle during the summer, 79% of respondents feel Laredo is not too cold to ride a bike during the winter months. Compared to northern climates where outdoor activity is nearly impossible from December to March, Laredo’s winter weather is welcoming.

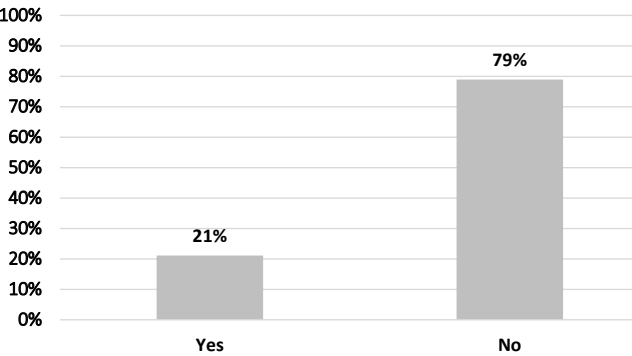
Although Laredo’s climate presents a challenge for bicycling during the day in the summer, most months of the year Laredo has good, comfortable bicycling weather. The lack of snow in Laredo allows for good riding conditions during winter months, and the low precipitation year-round offers many good weather days to use a bicycle.



IS IT TOO HOT IN LAREDO DURING THE SUMMER TO RIDE A BICYCLE?



IS IT TOO COLD IN LAREDO DURING THE WINTER TO RIDE A BICYCLE?



3.4 PUBLIC SURVEY

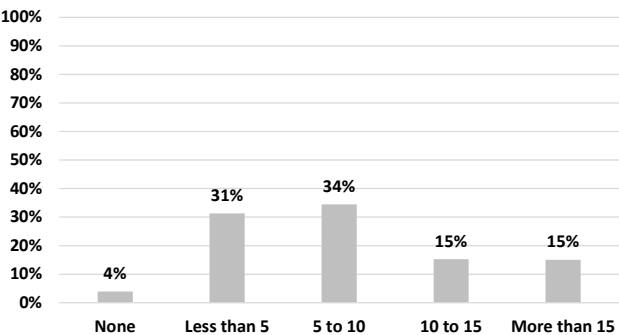
WAYFINDING IS NEEDED

Only 15% of survey respondents accurately estimated how many bicycle trails or lanes exist in Laredo. The City has more than 15 existing bicycle paths, yet more than two-thirds of respondents thought there were far fewer, with some even thinking there were none.

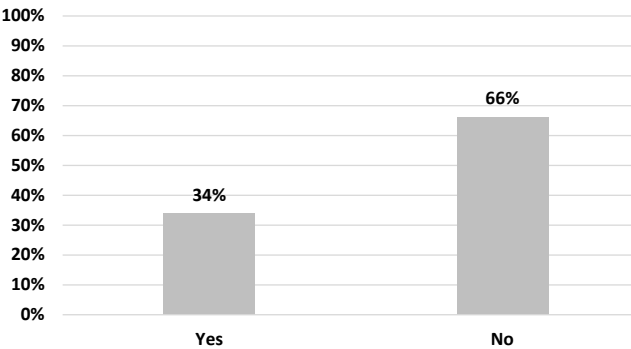
A total of 66% of respondents indicated that they never ride a bicycle using off-street trails. The use of off-street bicycle facilities is an important part of growing and encouraging active transportation in the region, especially among people who are less comfortable riding on the street and whose primary deterrence is the lack of safe bike infrastructure. A new interest in riding bicycles can be developed among people who rarely or never ride bicycles by providing safe and comfortable off-street facilities. Trails and other off-street facilities such as shared use paths alongside roads, can encourage newer cyclists to begin riding on these facilities whether for recreation or an alternative mode of transportation.

Considering this, it is important that off-street facilities be accessible as well as easy to find and navigate. This is why the need for wayfinding and branding is an integral part of developing a functional and well utilized active transportation network. Wayfinding and branding is necessary to familiarize users with the network and can help promote the use of active modes of transportation in the community.

HOW MANY BICYCLE TRAILS OR BICYCLE LANES EXIST IN LAREDO?



DO YOU EVER RIDE A BICYCLE ON OFF-STREET TRAILS?



JESSE LOZANO & JULIE RODRIGUEZ



Jesse Lozano and Julie Rodriguez are both teachers. They recently started biking, but have been jogging for some time. They both enjoy biking and jogging to release day to day stress and to keep fit. They usually ride and jog trails and parks such as North Central Park, Slaughter Park, and Independence Hills Park.

When told that the Active Transportation Plan is about creating connectivity throughout neighborhoods, Mr. Lozano stated “I think if it were to go into more of the neighborhoods, I think it’ll be cool. It’ll be easier for people to spend time outside, exercise, and get around.”

