

Petersburg, VA Activates Improved Plan for City Connectivity

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At A Glance

Petersburg Bike Walk Coalition (PBWC) was formed in 2019, with the goal of creating a connected community where all citizens of Petersburg have access to safely and conveniently travel to where they want to go. The Coalition's objective was to propose a bike/pedestrian network for the city that includes infrastructure improvements to specific routes that will allow residents to walk and bike to everyday destinations. In July 2020, the recommended network improvements and policy suggestions were adopted into the City's Comprehensive Plan.



Public Health Challenge

Approximately 40% of Petersburg City residents are obese, and almost one in three are physically inactive (USDSS, 2017). Both physical inactivity and obesity have been linked with increased risk for cardiovascular disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, hypertension and premature death. According to the 2020 County Health Rankings, 92% of the Petersburg community has access to exercise opportunities. However, this count includes access to parks and recreational facilities, and

does not include determination of access to adequate sidewalks, bike lanes and other activity-friendly routes. In a survey done by Bike Walk RVA (2019), approximately one in two respondents said lack of connected walking and biking routes and unsafe roads were challenging. Almost nine in ten respondents wanted to see a network of safe biking and walking infrastructure that connects destinations in Petersburg.

Find Out More

For more information about Petersburg's connectivity efforts, visit Bike Walk RVA/Sports Backers: <https://www.sportsbackers.org/program/bike-walk-rva/> or Petersburg's Planning and Community Development Department: <http://www.petersburgva.org/145/Planning-and-Community-Development>.

This project is supported by CDC's High Obesity Program (DP18-1809).

The adoption of the Bicycle Pedestrian Section into Petersburg's Comprehensive Plan includes 59 new or improved miles of activity-friendly routes throughout the community.

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Approach

In 2019, a multi-sector team led by Bike Walk RVA (including Crater Health Dept., Crater Planning District, the City Planning Dept. and Friends of the Lower Appomattox River) assessed the bike/pedestrian infrastructure in Petersburg to determine where improvements were needed to provide safer biking/walking routes. Also, a survey was conducted to consider the active transportation barriers faced by the community, and to obtain input on desired infrastructure enhancements. Based on the data, a Pedestrian and Bikeways Network was recommended. Community engagement activities then provided a forum for residents to learn about and/or provide feedback on the proposed recommendations.

Results

In July 2020, the team's proposed Bike/Pedestrian Section was adopted as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan. This includes the network of 59 miles of biking and/or walking friendly routes that connect many everyday destinations including the YMCA, library, schools, corner stores, parks, neighborhoods/apartments, shopping centers, medical facilities and churches throughout the city. The adoption of this section also includes support for passing three related policies including a Complete Streets Policy for the city, allowing bicycle riding on sidewalks where safe & necessary and requiring pedestrian walkways to be maintained during street closures due to construction. The improvements span across the city and will provide increased walking and biking opportunities to Petersburg's 31,346 residents, with focus on underserved populations.

What's Next

PBWC is working to communicate specifics of the newly adopted network to city officials and other stakeholders who can advance implementation. They will conduct walk audits of the network to identify additional improvements focused on walkability/bikeability that could be accomplished relatively easily. The team will also use pop-up infrastructure to demonstrate potential connectivity enhancements, and community feedback on these will be sought. Plans to move three bike/pedestrian friendly policies forward include promoting the adoption of the Complete Streets Policy, the change of ordinance to allow bikes on sidewalks and the adoption of an ordinance to mandate appropriate pedestrian infrastructure be considered with all new developments.