

Case Studies of Communities of Less Than 10,000 People with Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure

PROJECT TITLE

Case Studies of Communities of Less Than 10,000 People with Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure

STUDY TIMELINE

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More information about the VTrans Research Program, including additional Fact Sheets, can be found at: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/research>

Introduction or Problem Statement

More than eighty-four percent of cities and towns in the United States have fewer than 10,000 people. In Vermont, this percentage is significantly higher at ninety-seven percent. Despite the large number of these communities, multimodal facilities such as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure are not common (or at least not well-documented) in very small towns. Therefore, this research effort focused on developing case studies of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in communities of fewer than 10,000 people within five states, representing five regions within the U.S. (northeast, north-central, south-gulf, south-Atlantic, and the west). The goal of these case studies is to highlight lessons learned to support broader implementation of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in rural communities.



Methodology or Action Taken

With so many communities of this size, a prioritization method was needed to uncover which ones may have good examples of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Planning documents and articles on the topic of walking and biking

were reviewed for each community. The researchers also reached out to local community leadership to learn more about their bicycle and pedestrian planning and infrastructure. Then after, researchers used Survey123 to conduct on-site data collection for each community in each state. Data collected included photographs and spatial data related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure available within each community. This data will be used to create maps and graphics that highlight best practices. Interviews of individuals from within these communities and other stakeholders (i.e. regional entities, state entities) were conducted to better understand how existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure came to be, along with plans for the future. In addition, surveys of both businesses and residents were distributed within each community. These research efforts will be synthesized in a final report, and in-depth case studies of each community will be created.

Conclusions or Next Steps

As the project is on-going, conclusions are forthcoming. The initial tasks have already identified many successful examples of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in small communities. However, in some cases, further implementation may be limited due to staff and resource constraints, or insufficient buy-in from agency leadership or the public. Dependent upon COVID-19 restrictions, data collection across all five states is set to conclude by late fall 2021, with the report and case studies available by February of 2022.

Potential Impacts and VTrans Benefits

For this research project, the main deliverables will be three detailed case studies of communities with less than 10,000 people in Vermont (and three case studies in each of four other states). The case studies will include effective strategies and lessons learned from small communities that have successfully implemented bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; their primary benefit is to serve as guidance for other communities. For example, when VTrans provides technical assistance on bicycle and pedestrian planning, the agency can share the case studies with communities of similar size that are looking to implement more bicycle and/or pedestrian infrastructure. As a result, the products of this research will support broader implementation statewide. Past experience has shown that communities are inspired by successful initiatives in peer communities.

Furthermore, since the study incorporates participation by other states, the case studies for each state will be compared and contrasted. Consequently, there is an expectation that relevant best practices from other states may be adopted or used to improve upon practices within Vermont.

As an additional benefit, states participating in this research study will have the opportunity to participate in peer exchanges of agency representatives. Participants of similar exchanges have cited the professional development benefits of networking and sharing information with peers.