

11 ISSUES AND FORCES

11.1 Definitions

Issues are challenges for using current or future bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Forces are the existing conditions shaping decisions about bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, such as funding, connectivity, or public opinion.

11.2 Background

The Active Choices Plan Steering Committee and the general public have identified numerous issues and forces for the existing greenways system. Issues and forces help planners identify goals and objectives by showing them what problems need to be solved and what resources are available to help solve them.

11.3 Current Issues

11.3.1 Accessibility

1. Persons with Disabilities: While all users may access many recreational facilities and trails, people with disabilities may find some aspects of them difficult.

- Potential improvement areas include shared-use paths, ramps, signage, and accessibility from parking lots.

2. Facilities: Many of the current facilities have nearby parking, sidewalks, bus stops, or bicycle racks that allow a person to arrive at the destination and use the facility. In some cases, however, trails or open spaces might be perceived as too distant or inaccessible.

- Potential ways to overcome this include installing signage before and at trails, bikeways, and greenways; and encouragement campaigns.

11.3.2 Connectivity

The greenways and trails system should be better connected unto itself, to the full transportation system, and to activity centers.

1. Between travel modes: Parks and trails should provide facilities for multiple travel modes, including bicycles, cars, pedestrians, and public transit.

2. To major activity centers: Many activity centers in Champaign County do not have non-motorized vehicular access (i.e. bicycle and pedestrian paths). This increases vehicular traffic to those areas and creates unsafe options for bicyclists and pedestrians.

3. Between urban and rural areas: Many of the County's natural resources and trails exist outside the Champaign-Urbana-Savoy area. A lack of non-motorized vehicle connections decreases visits to these more rural settings.

4. Geographic efficiency: Many trails and bikeways in the area are not used for reaching specific destinations because they might cut off midway through a trip or might not be the shortest path to the destination.

- Loop connectivity and activity centers are two ways of finding the most necessary connections for the trail and bikeway system.

5. Obstacles to movement: Railroad tracks, bridges and overpasses, narrow roadways, and incomplete trails and bikeways are all obstacles to **bicycle movement** that create dependence on motorized travel. Similarly, lack of sidewalks, lack of marked crosswalks, and busy streets are all barriers to **pedestrian movement**.

11.3.3 Safety

1. Pedestrians: This is a multi-faceted issue that can include having difficulty crossing busy streets, poor lighting, and conflicts with other trail users.

2. Facility maintenance: Lack of maintenance can often lead to the deterioration of existing facilities.

3. Understanding the greenways system: Many system users are not aware of the Rules of the Road that apply to bicycle riding and pedestrian rights on roadways. In addition, intended use of the trail and bikeway system is often misinterpreted due to lack of signage and perception of who can use specific trail types.

- Educational components in plans and/or implementation can be ways to address this.

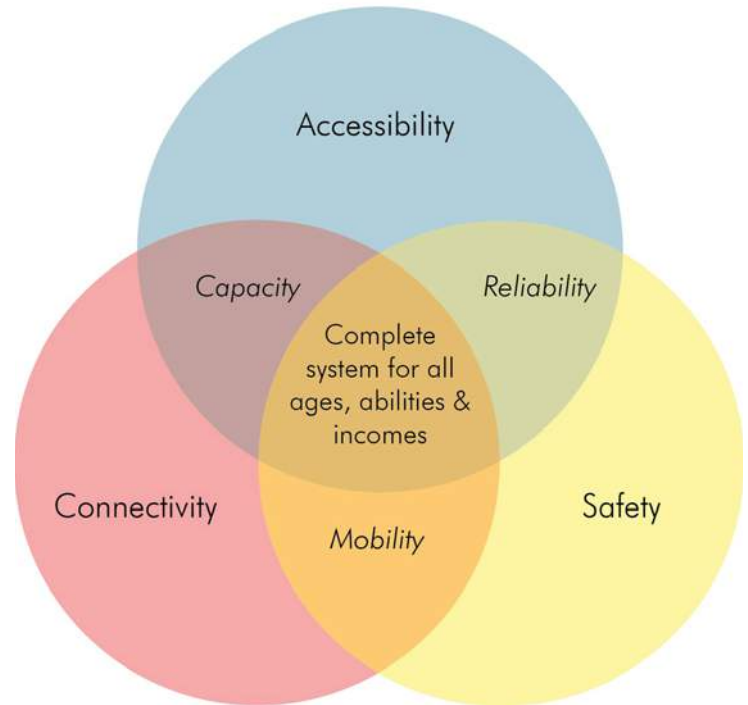
4. Bicycle Routes: Until 2013, there was no maintained bicycle route system in the Champaign-Urbana area for decades. High costs and liability issues forced local governments to remove the routes that once existed, forcing bicyclists to travel on roadways where no signage alerts motorists that they need to share the road.

- Publications and best practices (e.g. *AASHTO Bike Guide*, *MUTCD*) with Greenways & Trails member agency **coordination** can rebuild the bicycle route system in Champaign-Urbana and become unified, consistent, and usable.
- The City of Urbana installed bike route signs on numerous streets in Fall 2013 as part of its Safe Routes to School grant. These are the first signed bike routes in Champaign-Urbana in decades.

5. User-friendliness: The current system largely does not have directional signage and other resources to help users make the most of the area's greenways and trails.

- Local and federal guidelines and publications (e.g. *GT Design Guidelines*, *Logos, and Signage*; *AASHTO Bike Guide*) with Greenways & Trails member agency coordination can create a usable, unified system.

Greenways & Trails Issues Diagram



6. Obstacles to movement: Railroad tracks, bridges and overpasses, narrow roadways, and incomplete trails and bikeways are all obstacles to **bicycle movement**, creating dependence on motorized travel. Similarly, lack of sidewalks, lack of marked crosswalks, and busy streets are all barriers to **pedestrian movement**.

11.4 Current Forces

1. Existing trails and bikeways: Champaign County trails and bikeways often link important activity centers, including parks, schools, and shopping centers. Existing trails and bikeways have gaps in the system where stakeholders may determine how and when to fill those gaps.

2. System diversity: The Champaign County system offers facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages, skill levels, and intents, from people who bike and walk for **transportation** (e.g. commuting, shopping) to those who bike and walk for **recreation** (e.g. park trail users).

3. New subdivisions: Newly constructed subdivisions often have some sort of pedestrian and/or bicycle path system as well as a neighborhood park. Developers and/or local governments can plan these paths and parks to link to existing paths and parks.

- An example is the development ordinance the City of Champaign has requiring construction of the Pipeline Trail when adjacent land is developed.

4. The community: According to the 2003 Greenways and Trails Resident Survey, 72% of respondents agree greenways and trails connecting urban centers to rural communities and forest preserves enhance residents' quality of life. Such community support helps ensure developers and/or communities will create more trails and open spaces in Champaign County.

5. Interagency coordination: The Greenways and Trails Technical and Policy Committees have members from local governments, park districts, and other agencies to coordinate and plan for the Champaign County system's future.

6. The region: Developing trails and greenways that connect Champaign County with the rest of the state, especially metropolitan areas in Central Illinois (e.g. Danville), contributes to the statewide greenways and trails system. At the state level, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) continues to provide support for the development of the Kickapoo Rail-Trail, while the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has developed the first ever State Bikeway Plan in 2014.

11.5 Needs Assessment

Considering many current issues involving greenways and trails fall into the categories of accessibility and connectivity, the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission conducted a needs assessment for this plan. This was an effort to gauge the provision of public greenways and trails for people in Champaign County. The connectivity and accessibility of Champaign County's greenways and trails system was examined to help evaluate:

1. How pedestrians and cyclists experience the current system,
2. What type of infrastructure is available to these users, and
3. Where there are missing links in the system.

The full Needs Assessment Report can be found in Appendix 3.