

## 2 Existing Conditions

This chapter will highlight the existing conditions of the bikeway and pedestrian network in the City of Waukesha as part of the development of the 2011 Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities Plan.

### 2.1 Setting

Waukesha is a city of 69,100 people located approximately 18 miles west of Milwaukee. The city is located just south of Interstate 94, along both sides of the Fox River. Waukesha is the largest city in Waukesha County.

Waukesha originally incorporated as the Village of Prairieville in 1846, but changed its name to Waukesha the following year. In 1896 Waukesha incorporated as a city. Waukesha has seen relatively rapid growth since World War II, and the population has more than doubled in the last 50 years.

Waukesha has a historic downtown along the Fox River. Unlike many older downtowns, Waukesha's downtown has an active business community with numerous shops, restaurants, bars and other businesses.

Waukesha is home to Carroll University, one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in Wisconsin. The University is located just south of downtown, and students are a common presence in downtown restaurants and businesses. The University of Wisconsin – Waukesha County and the Waukesha County Technical College are also located in Waukesha.

Central Waukesha, particularly the area of the city south and east of the Fox River, has a street network that is largely built on a grid pattern. This grid network provides good connections for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians alike and will allow the development of a bicycle network that is easy for residents to access in this area. Areas of the city to the north and west of the Fox River, and some of the farther-flung neighborhoods in the south and northeast, developed in a suburban style. These areas typically have winding streets, long blocks and cul-de-sacs. Pedestrians and bicyclists often have a difficult time navigating these neighborhoods due to longer distances between street connections. Additionally, this style of development funnels most motor vehicle traffic onto the few streets that connect through neighborhoods, making bicycling on these streets and walking along or crossing them less comfortable for many people.

Waukesha is a “sidewalk community” where most of the streets have sidewalks adjacent to them. The City has a strong history of requiring sidewalks with new development, and ensuring that existing development has a complete pedestrian network. These sidewalks provide access to residences, employment centers, schools, commercial areas and other destinations. This pedestrian network serves not only people walking to and from destinations, but everyone, since even car and bus trips all begin and end with a short walk.



## 2.2 Inventory of Waukesha’s Existing Bikeways

The City of Waukesha’s existing bikeway and pedestrian network consists primarily of a network of shared use paths. The only recognized on-street bikeway to the signed connection between the Glacial Drumlin State Trail and New Berlin Recreation Trail.

### 2.2.1 Shared Use Paths

The City of Waukesha is the hub for a number of major regional paths. These paths are primarily owned and maintained by the state or county, although Waukesha built and maintains some of the paths. As this report is mainly concerned with facilities that can be used to transport oneself from “point A to point B”, the list below includes only the major Waukesha area shared use paths. Table 2-1 includes a list of all trails in Waukesha including those in park settings, both paved and unpaved.

#### Glacial Drumlin State Trail

The Glacial Drumlin State trail is a shared use path extending from the Fox River near downtown Waukesha west to Cottage Grove. The trail is a total of 52 miles, and passes through a number of Wisconsin villages and towns. Planning is currently underway to connect the trail to Madison’s bikeway network.

The Glacial Drumlin Trail is paved in the city, although portions of it are unpaved as you take the trail west. The trail is owned and maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Detailed information about the trail is available from the DNR at:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/parks/specific/glacialdrumlin/>

#### New Berlin Recreation Trail

The New Berlin Recreation Trail is a 7-mile paved recreation trail located on the Wisconsin Electric Power Company right-of-way in the City of New Berlin.

It extends from South 124th Street just south of Greenfield Ave. (S.T.H. 59) at the Milwaukee/ Waukesha County Line to Springdale Road in Waukesha. The trail is owned and maintained by the Waukesha County Parks Department.

The New Berlin Trail connects to the Milwaukee Oak Leaf Bike Trail in Greenfield Park. A connection to the State DNR Glacial Drumlin Trail is possible by using city streets through Waukesha.

Detailed information about the trail is available at:

<http://www.waukeshacounty.gov/defaultwc.aspx?id=39532>

#### Meadowbrook Trail

The Meadowbrook Trail is a shared use path that parallels County Highway TT on the northwest side of Waukesha. Including a short on-street segment, the path is approximately three miles long, and connects Kisdon Hill Park and the Oliver Youth Sports Complex to the Lake Country Recreation Trail.

The Meadowbrook Trail is paved and is maintained by the City of Waukesha.

### Lake Country Recreation Trail

The Lake Country Trail is a 15-mile trail, located on the former Milwaukee-Watertown Interurban Railway. It runs from just north of I-94 in Waukesha to Roosevelt Field Park in the City of Oconomowoc.

The Lake Country Recreation Trail is owned and maintained by the Waukesha County Parks Department. Detailed information about the trail is available at:

<http://www.waukeshacounty.gov/page.aspx?SetupMetaId=10888&id=10928>



### Fox River Trail and Boardwalk

The Fox River Trail runs through the City of Waukesha along the Fox River. The trail runs from Frame Park south along the east side of the river to Fox River Park on the south side of the city. The trail directly connects to the Glacial Drumlin State Trail near College Avenue. On-street signage also directs users over two miles of city streets to the New Berlin Recreation Trail.



The Fox River Trail is paved, and several parks along the trail offer water and restrooms. The trail is owned and maintained by the City of Waukesha Parks Department.

### Waukesha Riverwalk

The Waukesha Riverwalk is a shared use path on both sides of the Fox River in downtown Waukesha. The Riverwalk connects to the Fox River Trail and provides an off-street bicycling and walking area in downtown Waukesha.

The Riverwalk is maintained by the City of Waukesha.

Table 2-1: Existing Trails

Trail Name	Description	End Point	Managing Agency
<b>Regional Trails</b>			
Glacial Drumlin	10' wide paved and gravel trail from Waukesha to Cottage Grove	Just west of the Fox River	Wisconsin DNR
Lake Country	10' wide paved trail from just north of I-94 to Cushing Park in the City of Delefield	Just north of I-94 to Roosevelt Field Park in the City of Oconomowoc	Waukesha County
New Berlin	10' wide paved and gravel trail from the east side of Waukesha to New Berlin	Just west of Les Paul Parkway/ Hwy 164	Waukesha County

Trail Name	Description	End Point	Managing Agency
<b>Local Trails in Parks</b>			
Bethesda Spring Park	.25 mile paved trail along the river from south end of Bethesda Park to the north end	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
David's Park	.3 mile paved internal trail	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Fox River Parkway North	.9 mile paved trail through Fox River Parkway North on the east side of the Fox River	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Fox River Parkway South	1.0 mile paved trail from the south end of Fox River South to the north end on the east side of the Fox River	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Fox River Sanctuary	1.6 mile paved trail from W. Sunset along the east side of Fox River Sanctuary to S. Prairie Ave and College Ave	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Frame Park	1.7 miles paved internal trail	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Glacier Cone Park	.2 mile mowed internal trail	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Grede Park	.15 mile pave internal trail	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Heyer Park	1.5 and .4 mile paved internal trail	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Kisdon Hill Park	.6 mile mowed internal trail	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Moorewood Park	.6 mile rustic internal trail	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
W. R. Oliver Youth Complex	.3 mile paved internal trail	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
River Valley Park	.5 mile mowed internal trail	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Rivers Crossing Park	.3 mile paved trail and .15 mowed trail	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Riverwalk Corridor	on-street .4 mile from Veteran's Park to Farmers Market and on-street .2 mile from Farmers Market to Baxter Street	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.
Timber Ridge Park	.4 mile rustic internal trail	N/A	City of Waukesha Parks Dept.

Trail Name	Description	End Point	Managing Agency
County Highway TT Trail	Sidepath along the east side of Meadowbrook (CTH TT)	N/A	City of Waukesha Public Works
Waukesha County Fox River Park	Internal trails with two loops and segments along the east shore of the Fox River	N/A	Waukesha County
Streets Associated with Trails			
Lincoln Avenue	End of New Berlin Trail	Greenfield Ave	City of Waukesha Public Works
Greenfield Ave	Lincoln Ave	Newhall Ave	City of Waukesha Public Works
Newhall Ave	Greenfield Ave	S. Walton Ave	City of Waukesha Public Works
S Walton Ave	Newhall Ave	College Ave	City of Waukesha Public Works
Greenfield Ave	Lincoln Ave	Arcadian Ave	City of Waukesha Public Works
College Ave	S Prairie Ave	Dunbar	City of Waukesha Public Works
Dunbar	College Ave	Bethesda Spring Park	City of Waukesha Public Works
Summit Ave	Meadowbrook Road	Oliver Youth Sports Complex	City of Waukesha Public Works
Arcadian Ave	Greenfield Ave	East Ave	City of Waukesha Public Works
East Ave	Arcadian Ave	Riverwalk	City of Waukesha Public Works

### 2.2.2 On-Street Bike Lanes and Signed Shared Roadways

Currently, no on-street bike lanes exist in Waukesha. A small number of signs designate bike routes connecting the Glacial Drumlin State Trail and the Fox River Trail to the New Berlin Recreation Trail. However, the signage that does exist is substandard and is not readily apparent to users.

### 2.2.3 Bicycle-Accessible Bridges

The Fox River bisects Waukesha, running from the northeast to the southwest. While the river provides many benefits to the City of Waukesha as a natural resource and a destination, it also acts as a barrier for bicyclists and pedestrians. There are four bicycle/pedestrian only bridges in Waukesha. Two are associated with the Glacial Drumlin Trail; the bridge just southwest of the intersection of College Avenue and Sentry Drive and the bridge in Bethesda Springs Park. The other two bridges are associated with the Fox River Trail and are located between West Broadway Street and Barstow Street.

There are five motor vehicle bridges over the Fox River in Waukesha, all of which carry moderate to heavy levels of traffic. All of the bridges have sidewalks but no on-street accommodations for bicyclists. Many



bicyclists are not comfortable riding with traffic across the bridges in Waukesha, which forces them to use sidewalks to cross the river, which endangers the bicyclists and any pedestrians they may meet.

### **2.2.4 Bicycle Parking**

Little bicycle parking is available in downtown Waukesha. The Waukesha Bicycle Alliance has been working with the city to install more bicycle racks in 2011 or 2012, but even with additional racks installed there is likely to be a shortage of bicycle parking that is convenient to downtown businesses.

Many public buildings in the City of Waukesha also lack bicycle parking including the E. B. Shurts Center, the parks and recreation building and others.

## **2.3 Assessment of Conditions**

### **2.3.1 Bicycle Conditions on Streets**

Waukesha's roadway network supports local bicycling within residential neighborhoods, but does not provide adequate longer cross-town facilities for bicyclists who are not comfortable riding on roads with heavy traffic volumes, high motor vehicle speeds, or multiple lanes. Below are descriptions of common on-street conditions.

#### **Bikeable but Discontinuous Residential Streets**

Residential roadways, which comprise the majority of Waukesha's roadway network, are hospitable to bicyclists. These streets tend to have 25 mph speed limits, low motor vehicle volumes, and one lane in either direction. However, the bikeway network cannot be developed only on residential streets. The residential street system is discontinuous. Crossings of major streets, freeways, rivers and railroads can be difficult, and residential streets do not generally provide access to retail, commercial, employment and entertainment destinations. Bicycling on residential streets can be improved by developing wayfinding signage and improving access across major roads, rivers and railroad tracks.

#### **Constrained Roadway Widths**

Constrained roadway widths pose another challenge for bicycling, particularly in Waukesha's downtown and on bridges over the Fox River. Arterials and collectors in these areas are relatively narrow, and there is little room to widen these streets to accommodate bicycle facilities. Outside lane widths are often narrow and uncomfortable for bicycling. It may be possible to accommodate bicycle facilities on these roadways through shared lane markings.

The areas of Waukesha that have developed more recently have much wider streets that can likely accommodate bicycle lanes.

#### **High Volume Arterials are Uncomfortable for Bicycling**

Many of Waukesha's arterials are not comfortable for bicycling, due to high speeds, numerous driveways and heavy traffic. Improving these roadways for bicyclists generally means providing a separate lane or right of way for bicyclists. Modifications can range from reducing lane widths to provide bicycle lanes, adding bicycle lanes as part of a road diet, to developing an access control plan and parallel shared use path.

### 2.3.2 Walking Conditions on Streets

As mentioned above Waukesha is a “sidewalk city” with sidewalk on both sides on most streets. Downtown Waukesha is very walkable with its dense land use making for short trips to destinations and its narrow streets making it relatively easy to cross streets. While downtown as a whole is walkable there are a few areas of concern:

- Connection to the transit center from the downtown/riverwalk is not clearly marked and involves walking across a large parking lot
- Barstow at the bridge does not have sufficient pedestrian facilities considering the numbers of pedestrians in the area due to the River Walk Corridor, the Farmer’s Market and other pedestrian attractors



Free flow right turn lanes are common and make it easy for cars to turn at a higher speed which endangers pedestrians. Waukesha’s neighborhoods are walkable as a whole; however, there are areas that present challenges for pedestrians:

- West St Paul Avenue and East North Street carry high volumes of traffic at relatively high speeds and thus form a barrier for pedestrians trying to access the downtown from the west side of the river
- Pedestrian access to newer commercial development on busy streets such as Moreland Road (east of the river), Grandview Boulevard (north of Northview Road) and Les Paul Parkway is difficult due to intersection design that focuses on moving large car volumes rather than providing pedestrian access
- Current ordinances do not require sidewalks in industrial areas and they often do not have sufficient street lighting to accommodate walking
- The cul du sac land development patterns found west of the river require pedestrians to walk indirect paths to their destinations

### 2.3.3 Bicycle and Walking Conditions on Shared Use Paths

Bicycling and walking conditions are generally good on the shared use paths in Waukesha. Most of the paths in and around the city are paved, which provides a higher quality experience for bicyclists, walkers with strollers, in-line skaters, and wheel chair users than unpaved paths. The greatest concern with the shared use paths is difficulties connecting from the Glacial Drumlin State Trail to the New Berlin Recreation Trail and a dangerous crossing of State Highway 164 on the New Berlin Trail and the on-street connection to Waukesha from the Lake Country Trail.

## 2.4 Education and Encouragement Programs

### 2.4.1 Existing efforts

#### Available Maps and Materials

City of Waukesha and Vicinity Trails Map- Available at city hall, the parks department and other outlets

Waukesha County Park System Maps -

<http://www.waukeshacounty.gov/page.aspx?SetupMetaId=10888&rid=10902>

City of Milwaukee Bike Maps - <http://city.milwaukee.gov/maps4460.htm>

Bikeeverywhere Milwaukee Bike Map - [http://bikeeverywhere.com/milwaukee\\_bike\\_map/](http://bikeeverywhere.com/milwaukee_bike_map/)

#### Existing Clubs, Organizations, and Teams

Waukesha Bicycle Alliance - <http://bikewaukesha.org>

Spring City Spinner Bike Club - <http://www.springcityspinners.org/>

Wisconsin Off-Road Bicycle Association (WORBA) - <http://metromountainbikers.com/>

Bike Federation of Wisconsin - <http://www.bfw.org/>

The Waukesha Bicycle Alliance is an advocacy and social organization whose mission is to “make Waukesha County a better place to ride, and to encourage more people to explore the County on their bikes.” Waukesha Bicycle Alliance is working with the BID and the City on the Waukesha Bike Rack Project to install bike racks downtown. They are also working with the County to build the Brookfield-Waukesha Trail in an abandoned railroad corridor owned by the County.

## 2.5 Multi-Modal Connections

Waukesha Metro Transit provides extensive bus service throughout the Waukesha area. Bicycle racks are not provided on buses, but citizens report that bicycles are allowed inside the buses if they are not too crowded. Bike parking is provided at the Waukesha Transit Center. The streets surrounding the Transit Center however are not bicycle or pedestrian friendly. Improvements are needed to connect the Transit Center to downtown and other nearby destinations for those choosing to bicycle or walk.

## 2.6 Opportunities and Constraints

Waukesha has many opportunities for improving bicycling and walking conditions in the city, but is also faced with a number of constraints. Some of these issues are detailed below.

Opportunities	Constraints
Numerous regional paths converge in Waukesha; connecting the paths could make Waukesha a bicycling and hiking hub for Southeastern Wisconsin	Narrow streets downtown may be difficult to accommodate bicycles on with facilities other than shared lane markings
Wide arterial and collector streets outside of downtown may be retrofitted with bicycle facilities	Suburban-style development in newer neighborhoods lack a grid street development pattern and therefore lack connectivity
Grid street network in older sections of city provide opportunity for well-connected network of bicycle boulevards	Crossings over the Fox River are limited and generally on busy streets with little space for bicyclists
Potential shared-use paths in existing right-of-way could quickly expand the off-street network	Interstate 94 and Fox River are barriers to bicyclists and pedestrians that may be difficult and/or expensive to cross
Linking Glacial Drumlin and New Berlin Trail users to downtown could boost local business	Large and busy intersections in commercial areas such as Moreland Road or Silvernail Road are difficult to safely transverse on foot or bicycle
Carroll University's central location can promote bicycling and walking in the central city area	
Waukesha has a nearly complete sidewalk network, including in downtown and the neighborhoods	

## 2.7 Conclusion

Based on the existing conditions, the City of Waukesha has many opportunities to expand the bikeway network and the pedestrian facilities within the city. The city has a robust network of regional trail connections that can serve as the basis for expanding bicycle facilities in the city.