

# *Chapter 1*

## Introduction



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### 1.1 Background

The Lexington Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (Master Plan) is a framework that directs bicycle and pedestrian efforts in Fayette and Jessamine Counties. These two counties became the regional Lexington Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in 1993. The MPO is a transportation policy-making organization responsible for the planning and funding of transportation projects within the region.



*Rural Fayette County Horse Farm*



*Brannon Crossing in Northern Jessamine County*

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan was a recommendation in the Lexington Area MPO 2030 Transportation Plan that was adopted in June 2004. As noted in the Transportation Plan “barriers have made bicycling and walking uncomfortable at best, and even dangerous in some locations.” The plan states “cities with programs, policies, and funding in place to improve conditions for bicycling and walking have enhanced bicycle and pedestrian safety in their communities, while making travel by these modes more

enjoyable.” The three primary recommendations in the plan were to prepare comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plans for the counties in the MPO, to ensure that a full-time bicycle and pedestrian coordinator position is funded and integrated into the MPO, and to develop bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements. With the completion and adoption of this Master Plan, the framework will be in place to achieve those recommendations.

### 1.2 Why Accommodate Biking and Walking?

The 2030 Transportation Plan has a section devoted to bicycle and pedestrian planning. However, increasing interest in biking and walking warrants a more in-depth plan to improve accommodations for these modes in Fayette and Jessamine Counties. Benefits of walking and biking include:

#### Quality of Life

Communities where people want to live are ones with a high quality of life. Throughout the world this is exemplified by a community that is walkable. People-oriented, walkable cities provide a quality of life that is attractive to prospective businesses and residents. The National Center for Bicycling and Walking has developed the following statements as a general description of a walkable community:

- People of all ages and abilities have easy access to their community “on foot” - an automobile is not needed for every trip.
- People walk more and the community and neighborhoods are safer, healthier, and friendlier places.
- Parents feel comfortable about their children being outside in their neighborhoods; they don’t worry about the threat of motor vehicles.
- Children spend more time outside with other children and are more active, physically fit, and healthy.
- Streets and highways are designed to provide safe and comfortable facilities



for pedestrians and bicyclists, and are safe and easy to cross.

- Pedestrians are given priority in neighborhood, work, school, and shopping areas. Motor vehicle speeds are reduced to ensure compatibility with pedestrian traffic.
- Motor vehicle speeds are carefully controlled to ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses and the routine presence of pedestrians.
- Drivers of motor vehicles operate them in a prudent, responsible fashion, knowing that they will be held strictly accountable for any threat, injury, or death caused by their lack of due care or violation of the vehicle code.
- Streetscapes are designed to attract pedestrian use. There are buffers between cars and pedestrians, street trees, pedestrian-scale buildings, setbacks, front porches and interesting storefronts.

## Economics

### *Property Values*

Property values tend to be higher in walkable communities and houses near trails have higher resale values than those not located near trails. Note, for example, the five most walkable cities in the U.S. in 2007, according to a survey by the American Podiatric Association. They are: Madison, WI; Austin, TX; San Francisco, CA; Charlotte, NC; and Seattle, WA. Each is among the leaders in property values in their regions.

### *Reduced Transportation Costs*

Biking and walking to local destinations reduces vehicle trips and can reduce the personal and public cost associated with automobile use, including congestion mitigation, air emission controls and frequent pavement maintenance. Roadway widening is costly and the use of valuable land for additional vehicle lanes and parking lots removes it from more beneficial uses and results in negative environmental impacts.

Needless expense is added to tight school and family budgets when many school students who could walk

or bike are driven or bused. It is estimated that over 50% of parents in Fayette County drive their children to school despite many of them living within walking or biking distance. There is a high cost associated with busing students to school sites that are not located within biking or walking distance to the students they serve. Many students that do live within biking and walking distance are “hazard bused” because there is a lack of safe sidewalks and roadway crossings.

### *Tourism*

Bicycle tourism contributes significantly to many local economies. Bicycle tourism alone is responsible for \$60 million in North Carolina’s Outer Banks, and Monterey, CA holds a four-day bike festival which contributes over \$25 million to the local economy. The local “Horsey Hundred” ride hosted in neighboring Georgetown, KY has drawn 1500 cyclists from 34 states and Canada to the Bluegrass Region on an annual basis. The region is lauded by local cyclists as one of the most scenic and attractive places in the country to bicycle and there are significant opportunities to expand, enhance and promote bicycle tourism.

### *Health Care Costs*

The State of Kentucky spent approximately \$1.1 billion dollars in 2003 for obesity-related medical expenditures. Walking is the number one activity that doctors recommend and which Americans prefer to stay fit; however, safe and desirable walking facilities must be present.

## Safety

There were 622 motor vehicle crashes involving pedestrians or bicyclists in Fayette and Jessamine Counties from 2003-2005. Eighty-four percent of collisions resulted in injuries and 15 crashes involved a fatality.

While less than five percent of work-related trips in Fayette County are made by walking, pedestrians represent 10-20% of all traffic fatalities each year. A perceived sense of decreased safety also exists. Many cyclists interviewed during the development of this plan said they no longer bike in Jessamine County due to an increase in traffic speeds, volumes and aggressive drivers.

## Recreation

Parks provide many benefits to a community, and safe access to parks is vital, especially for children. In addition to needing bike and pedestrian access to parks,



over 700 citizens responding to a 2006 survey in Fayette County cited walking trails and a county-wide bike path system as the second-most priority need for parks in the area, second only to more restroom facilities.

## Air Quality

The American Lung Association rated the air quality of Fayette County as no better than “C” in 2006. Fayette County achieved “attainment” status in 2006 for ozone and particulate matter pollutants; however, the area was on the cusp of “attainment” versus “non-attainment” status. Auto and other emissions must be closely monitored to maintain acceptable pollutant levels in the area.

## Health, Fitness and Physical Activity

Sixty percent of Fayette and Jessamine County residents are either obese or overweight. Fewer than 35% of our residents engage in moderate physical activity five or more days a week. Creating more and safer opportunities to walk and bike for recreation and transportation will encourage people to be more active. Studies have shown direct correlations between the presence of sidewalks, trails and bike lanes and an increase in bicycle commuting and recreational walking.

## Social Equity

Year 2000 U.S. Census data indicates approximately 6.5% of households in Jessamine County and 8% of households in Fayette County do not have access to a vehicle. Over 20% of Fayette County and Jessamine County residents are over 65 or under 16 years of age. Fourteen percent of residents are physically disabled and may be unable to drive. Safe pedestrian accommodations, augmented by public transit, are needed to provide the non-driving public (approximately 1/3 of our residents) with the mobility they need.

## Legal Requirements

The MPO and associated Long Range Transportation Plan are required by federal transportation legislation (SAFETEA-LU) to “provide for the development and integrated management and operation of transportation facilities (including pedestrian walkways and bi-

cycle transportation facilities) that will function as an intermodal transportation system.”

## Public Demand

The public articulated their desire for improvements to the bicycling and walking environment during public meetings and in response to over 600 citizen surveys completed during this planning process. Some people said they need better places to walk and bike. Others said they have limited time to incorporate walking or biking into their busy schedules. Some have a perception that it is not safe to walk or bike. Nearly all agreed that more trails, sidewalks and bike lanes are needed and that these facilities would encourage them to bike and walk more frequently. Recent research has established that, in fact, people do walk and bike more often if safe facilities connect them to places they want to go.

## Summary

The reasons for accommodating bicycling and walking and the underlying purpose of this plan is more than simply meeting the requirements of laws and regulations; it is a plan intended to respond to the desires of the people of the region for better opportunities to walk and bike; to identify the actions needed to make our neighborhoods better, safer places for people to live healthy and active lives; and to improve the quality of life in our region while ensuring our continued economic vitality.

## 1.3 Study Area

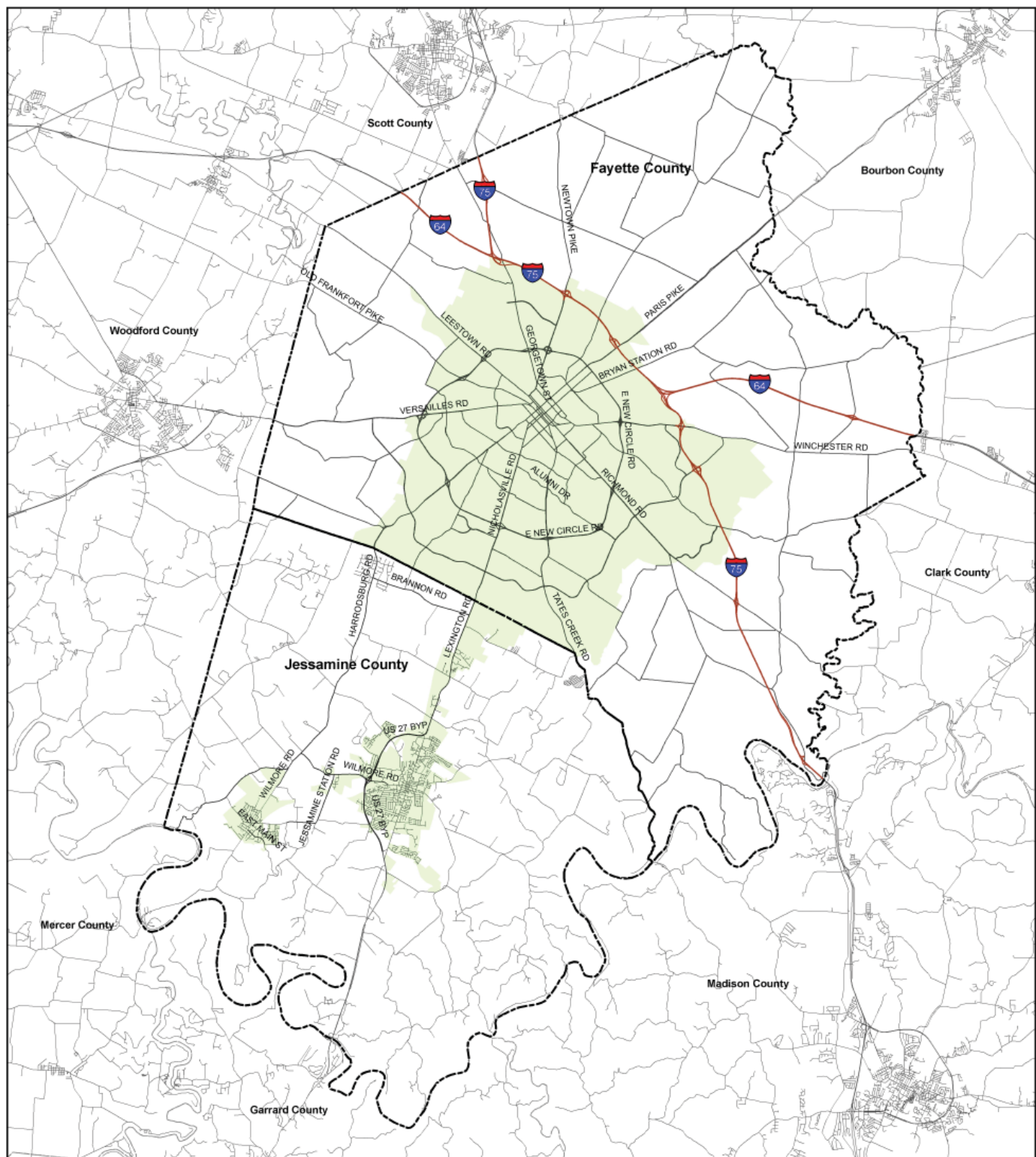
The Study Area for the plan is the two counties that comprise the Lexington Area MPO—Fayette County and Jessamine County, Kentucky (see figure 1). Fayette County has a merged city/county government (Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government or “LFUCG”), while Jessamine County has two city governments (City of Wilmore and City of Nicholasville) and a county government.

Jessamine County’s estimated population is 43,463 persons, while Fayette County’s is 268,080 persons (U.S. Census Bureau estimate, 2005). Fayette County’s growth from 1990 to 2000 was 15%, and Jessamine County grew by 28%. There are 173 square miles of land in Jessamine County and 284 in Fayette County.





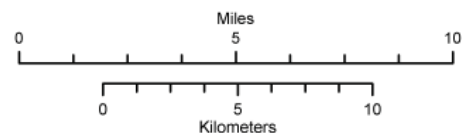
Figure 1. Study Area - Fayette and Jessamine Counties



### Legend

- Urban Service Area/Urbanized Area
- Interstate
- Arterial/Collector Road
- Other Road

Source: KYTC, KYGEONET, NTAD (2005) and LFUCG (2006)



## FAYETTE COUNTY

- Merged city/county government--Lexington Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG)
- Guided by Lexington Fayette Urban County Comprehensive Plan
- 268,080 persons (2005 estimate)
- 284 square miles of land

## JESSAMINE COUNTY

- Two city governments, one county government
- Guided by Jessamine County/Wilmore Comprehensive Plan and Nicholasville Comprehensive Plan
- 43,463 persons (2005 estimate)
- 173 square miles of land

Pressure to develop is strong in both Fayette and Jessamine Counties. With the 2006 Comprehensive Plan Update, the Expansion Area in Lexington-Fayette County was not increased, meaning growth will occur as infill and redevelopment. In 2006, Nicholasville city limits in Jessamine County were extended northward along the US 27 corridor to the Fayette County line. This resulted in an uninterrupted expanse of residential and commercial development between the two counties.

### 1.4 Brief History of Bicycling and Walking in the Region

Shortly after the settlement of Lexington, sidewalks were required of property owners downtown and in adjacent neighborhoods. This trend continued until the 1950's and 1960's when opinions changed about sidewalks and new subdivisions, such as Lexington's Stonewall and Lakewood, were built without sidewalks. Suburban design did not include pedestrian-oriented commercial centers and the street patterns lacked connectivity. Transit ridership and pedestrian travel declined. The 1970's Subdivision Regulations required sidewalks on local and collector streets, however, Lexington's planning commission could waive sidewalks on arterial streets.

Due to development trends and the range of access that personal autos provided, schools, parks and commercial sites in Fayette and Jessamine Counties were located on large parcels, separated from neighborhoods, and accessed by major roadways. Busing students longer distances to schools increased and walking to school decreased. Neighborhood groceries and retail shops were also regionally-oriented, rather than neighborhood-oriented.

In the 1990's the inclusion of sidewalks on both sides of local streets became routine, however, many collector and arterial streets continued to lack sidewalks. Transportation improvements focused on roadway capacity building and the addition of travel lanes continued to increase roadway widths and pedestrian crossing distances.

From 1990 to 2000, the U.S. Census reported a continued decline in walking rates in Fayette and Jessamine Counties as the number of vehicle miles traveled increased steadily. During that same time period, bicycling rates in Fayette County increased for the first time. It was during that time that Lexington implemented a number of bicycle facility improvements including the Alumni Drive and Euclid Avenue bike lanes.

In 1999, the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) was established by the MPO to provide guidance on bicycle and pedestrian needs and projects in the MPO region. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities began to be routinely included in roadway improvement projects. Both grants and federal surface transportation funds were also allocated for more bike and pedestrian projects during the ensuing years. A Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator Position was established in 2003. Bicycle and pedestrian facility mileage and funding have steadily increased in the region since the establishment of the BPAC and Coordinator position.



## 1.5 Planning Framework

This Master Plan shall be adopted by the MPO as an element of the 2030 Transportation Plan. The 2030 Plan is also an element of the LFUCG Comprehensive Plan as adopted by the Fayette County Planning Commission. Plan adoption by the Jessamine County/Wilmore Joint Planning Commission and the Nicholasville Planning Commission is also desirable.

Comprehensive planning documents relevant to the two-county study area are:

- Lexington-Fayette Urban County Comprehensive Plan, 2006 Update
- Jessamine County/City of Wilmore Comprehensive Plan, 2004
- Nicholasville Comprehensive Plan, 2002

## 1.6 Planning Objectives

The planning process included steps to meet the following key objectives:

- Seek and gain meaningful input from the public, stakeholders and MPO;
- Provide multiple opportunities for input at the beginning of the process, during the draft preparation and before adoption;
- Develop vision and goals that articulate the input received from the public, stakeholders and MPO;
- Review existing documentation to understand other planning efforts up to this point;
- Evaluate physical conditions to understand the current pedestrian and biking environments;
- Propose policies and standards for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and a prioritized list of on-road and off-road facility needs; and
- Recommend strategies for implementing the Master Plan.

## 1.7 Organization of the Plan

This plan is organized into the following chapters and appendices:

**Chapter 1: Introduction** provides the background for the development of this plan.

**Chapter 2: Mission, Vision, Goals** describes a detailed set of objectives to make bicycling and walking regular, routine activities.

**Chapter 3: Community Input** describes the various activities used to directly involve the residents, professionals, agencies and organizations of the Region in the development of the plan.

**Chapter 4: Existing Conditions** examines the existing land use patterns; streets, sidewalks and trails; and comprehensive planning documents.

**Chapter 5: Recommendations to Accommodate Biking and Walking** focuses on recommending actions for creating a more walkable and bike-friendly region and for eliminating gaps in the existing network of on-street bicycle facilities, sidewalks and trails.

**Chapter 6: Implementation** presents the “how” complement to the “what” of the goals and objectives and recommendations set forth in Chapters 2 and 5.

**Appendix A: Existing Conditions** provides further background information about the study area, the pedestrian environment and bicycle environment.

**Appendix B: Survey** contains a copy of the survey distributed across the study area at the beginning of the project and a summary of the 629 responses.

**Appendix C: Summary of Public and Stakeholder Meetings** provides a summary document from the earliest planning phase of the process, as well as comments from the public about the Draft Plan.

**Appendix D: Plan Adoption** contains the resolution by the Lexington Area MPO amending the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and the summary of public comments.

**Appendix E: Bibliography** provides a list of sources consulted during the preparation of this plan.

