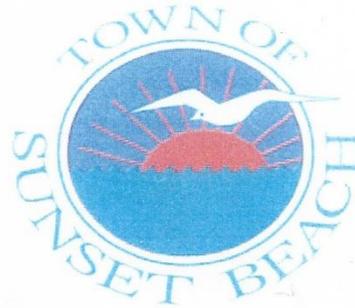


**SUNSET BEACH
BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN
PLAN UPDATE**



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
&
RECOMMENDATIONS**

March 2, 2009

*As approved by the Town Council at
their March 2, 2009 meeting*

Prepared with the Assistance of the
Cape Fear Area Rural Planning Organization
Wilmington, North Carolina

SUNSET BEACH BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Overview

The Town of Sunset Beach recognizes the importance of safe biking and walking to its residents and visitors. As such, it is updating a plan for biking and pedestrian facilities in the Town. This plan is intended to give Sunset Beach residents and visitors, decision-makers, public safety officials, town staff and others information and guidance on biking and walking in the Town. It was prepared with the guidance of a Bicycling & Pedestrian Facility Plan Steering Committee (BPSC).



Background

In the early 1990's a very brief bicycle plan was prepared for the Town. That plan proposed several bike trails, identified key biking issues, recommended actions to address them and outlined an action agenda for plan implementation.

This update uses the earlier plan as a basis for its recommendations.

In addition, one of the policies included in the Town's recently updated CAMA Land Use Plan is:

- o Bike and Pedestrian Interconnectivity

The Town supports and shall pursue efforts to increase bike and pedestrian pathways connecting commercial areas with residential areas, as well as connecting the mainland areas with the island and beach access sites.

It is with the guidance of this policy that the Town is pursuing the update of the bike & ped plan.



Bicycle & Pedestrian Issues

The BPSC identified the following as critical issues in the community (Some are specific to Sunset Beach, others could be found in any community):

- Lack of adequate signage to warn vehicular traffic of bicyclists;
- Need for constant education of seasonal visitors of safe riding areas;
- Lack of adequate signage to identify the eastern terminus of the bike route along Beach Dr.;
- Bike & Ped route on the same path creates conflict;
- Lack of adequate signage to warn vehicular traffic of pedestrian crossing;
- Lack of helmet use amongst many bicyclists;
- Extremely limited sidewalks in all parts of town create safety issues;
- Need for integrating Town bike routes with plans for possible route connecting to new County Park on Georgetown Rd.; and
- Lack of right-of-way along the causeway to allow bicyclists to ride to/from the mainland to the island part of the Town

Existing Conditions

Due to the different issues and requirements of pedestrian and bicycling facilities, they are addressed separately in this section.

Bicycling-Designated bicycling lanes (facilities) are severely lacking in the town. There are two distinct biking environments in the town; mainland or island. They are briefly described here.

Mainland- The mainland has limited room on the streets for biking lanes. The map of future routes indicates routes that should have adequate room for stripping and signage. These routes, while not a perfect situation, will help guide bicyclists from the islands to/from the commercial center at NC

904/NC179 (Seaside) in a relatively safe manner and toward a more leisurely trip through Sea Trails Plantation

Island- Safe bicycling on the island is another matter. Due to *extremely* limited space on island streets a dedicated lane for biking is simply not possible.

Walking- The town's existing sidewalks requirements in the subdivision ordinance should continue to be vigorously enforced. As is the case with bike lanes there are limited opportunities to "retrofit" developed residential areas due to lack of space, utility poles and driveway culverts.

Recommendations

These recommendations are critical parts of a plan to improve the quality of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the Town:



Recommendations # 1-Erect "Share the Road" signs and provide striping along Shoreline Dr and Park St. for a bike lane from Sunset Blvd. to NC 179 near the new Intracoastal Waterway bridge.

Discussion-This route will provide bicyclists a connection between the island and the mainland's east side commercial area. That route is a distance of about 1 ½ miles. Signage should be installed when the bridge is complete directing bicyclists crossing the new bridge from the island to this route.



Recommendation # 2- Install sidewalks along the south side of Sunset Blvd. from the intersection of Pine View St. and Sunset Blvd. to the foot of the new bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway.

Discussion – The Town should continue to require new developments to install sidewalks. Where there are gaps in the sidewalks the Town should continue to fund their construction.

Recommendation # 3- Establish a bike lane in Sea Trail Plantations

Discussion – In collaboration with Sea Trail Plantation and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) the Town should establish a bike lane (including signage) along Clubhouse Dr. from Sunset Blvd to Georgetown Rd. and along Georgetown Rd. to Angel's Trace and then connecting back to Sunset Blvd. Since this route traverses state, municipal and privately owned roads, it will require collaboration between multiple parties.



Recommendation # 4- Erect Signage Warning Motorists of Bicyclers.

Discussion- Begin an aggressive program to notify vehicular drivers of the presence of bicyclers in Town through the use of road signs. These signs should be located on the most heavily traveled roads such as Shoreline Dr., Sunset Blvd., the causeway and Main Street.



Recommendation # 5- Begin a vigorous program to publicize biking safety, existing bicycle routes and state and local bicycling laws.

Discussion- Brochures should be developed and made available to visitors advising them of biking laws, (such as helmet usage by young bikers), safe biking practices and maps of routes in the Town. The brochures could be distributed through bike rental shops, cottage rental businesses; retail businesses, town law enforcement officers, the Town's web site and other outlets.



Recommendation # 6-Establish a "loop bike route" in the island portion of Town that would connect the beach access facility at the intersection of Main Street and the causeway with a loop to include Main Street, W 40th Street, North Shore Dr. and Canal Street. The route should be "signed" and where room permits markings placed on the pavement to indicate that it is a designated bike route. Once the new bridge is completed this route should be connected with bike routes in the mainland portion of town to afford bicyclers a designated route connecting the two parts of the community.



Recommendation # 7-Collaborate with the NC DOT (through their Division of Bike & Ped) and Brunswick County to plan for the connecting bike lanes in the Town to the planned county park near the intersection of Georgetown Rd. & Ocean Isle Beach Rd.

Discussion - The Town should meet soon with the County to express an interest in such a feature. This feature will provide a valuable asset to the community.



Recommendation # 8-Continue to enforce ordinances requiring sidewalks in new developments.

Discussion- In newly platted subdivisions, sidewalks should continue to be required and should also be required when new commercial development is permitted.



Recommendation # 9- Publicize NC Bike Route 3

Discussion- NC Bike Route 3's southern terminus is the South Carolina state line at Calabash. It connects Sunset Beach to Southport, Wilmington and other coastal North Carolina towns. The town should work with the bike shops, the chamber of commerce and others to promote this resource.



Recommendation # 10-Pursue NCDOT Enhancement Funds

Discussion- Transportation Enhancement grants, awarded through NCDOT, are intended to benefit the traveling public and help communities increase transportation choices and access. Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities and Safety are among the eligible activities. Even though a call for projects is not scheduled in the near future, the Town should begin exploring possible projects to position themselves to submit a quality application.



Recommendation # 11-The Town should continue to set aside funds for sidewalks.

Discussion- The Town Council should continue to budget funds for a sidewalks and consider allocating a portion of their Powell Bill funds for sidewalks.



Recommendation # 12- Establish bike lanes on either side of NC 179 between the eastern town limits and the foot of the new bridge over the Waterway

Discussion- Preliminary estimates by the NC Dept. Of Transportation are that such bike lanes would cost about \$658,700. (see attached email and Construction Estimate)



Recommendation # 13- Maintain a Bike & Ped Committee

Discussion- A Bike & Ped Committee should be maintained. Its purpose would be to advise the Town Council on issues regarding bicycle and pedestrian programs, projects, policies and safety.

Useful links

As Approved by the Town Council on March 2, 2009

NCDOT's "Bike & Ped" Division

<http://www.ncdot.org/transit/bicycle/default.html>

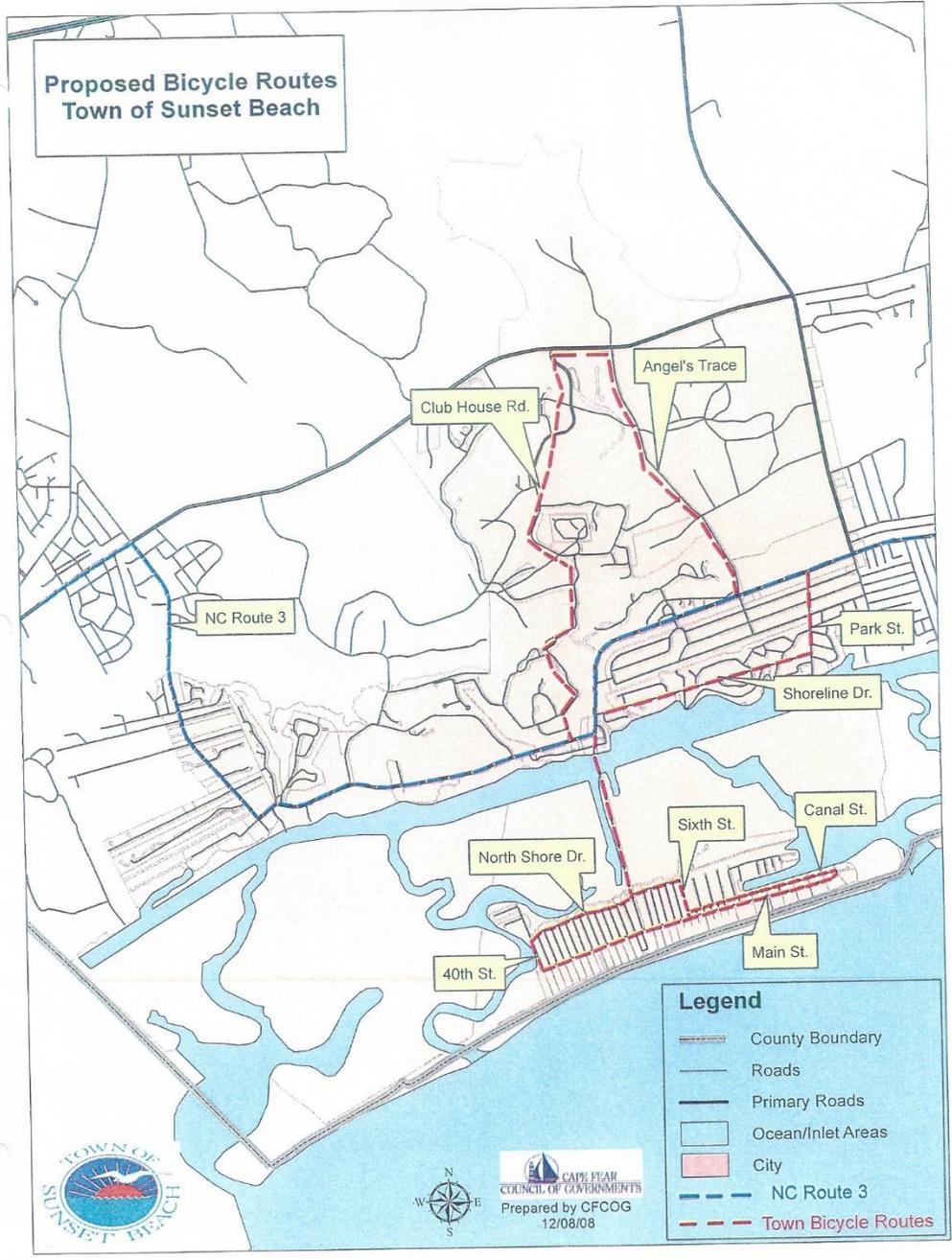
NCDOT's Enhancement Program

<http://www.ncdot.org/programs/Enhancement/>

Cape Fear Cyclists

<http://www.capefearcyclists.org/>

**Proposed Bicycle Routes
Town of Sunset Beach**



Legend

- County Boundary
- Roads
- Primary Roads
- Ocean/Inlet Areas
- City
- NC Route 3
- Town Bicycle Routes



CAPE FEAR
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Prepared by CFCOG
12/08/08

APPENDIX

Bike Trails/Pedestrian Walkways

The Bike and Pedestrian Walkway Steering Committee has met over the last several months drafting a Plan that has been presented to the Planning Board and soon to be approved by them for recommendation to the Council. This probably will be before the Council at the March 2 regular meeting. Approval of the Plan is only the first step; then the Town must budget funds for constructing the trails (ie, striping and signs, or even pavement added to widen the streets). The Plan also includes sidewalks, that is Pedestrian Walkways.

Constructing the trails can mean either adding asphalt at the cost of possibly several hundred thousand dollars or can mean merely striping the sides of existing roads and adding signs to warn drivers of bicyclists and the importance of sharing the roads. The latter approach will be much less costly, but it will not protect bicyclists as well. Some of our roads are very narrow and sharing them with vehicle drivers can make bicyclists nervous and more subject to collisions with those vehicles.

Adding of pavement would mean adding a minimum of about three feet of pavement to each side of East Shoreline Drive in order to create what effectively would be four or five feet wide bike paths (with the addition of striping one or two feet into the existing pavement). Naturally, five feet wide bike paths would be somewhat safer than three feet wide paths. The fact is, given the 18' width of East Shoreline and Park Drive, it isn't practical to stripe either road into the existing travel lanes at all (thereby reducing those travel lanes to less than a width of 9 feet), so I believe we should add four or five feet of pavement to each side. Just adding four feet to each side would cost about \$173,000.

Therefore, the only way to stripe any roads in town for bike lanes is to widen them by a few feet on each side; a very expensive proposition. However, if we build sidewalks along some roads such as Sunset Boulevard between the new bridge and Town Hall, most recreational bicyclists will make use of them and be safer there. For that matter, we may want to construct a sidewalk along both Shoreline and Park too. We can put share the road "bike path" signs along our designated bike paths that will at least alert drivers that they must be aware of bicyclists. The more experienced long-distance bicyclist is used to biking on shared roads and will continue to make use of the roads without the striping of bike lanes.

We may not be able to add pavement to the island streets either because they are so narrow in the rights of way out there, not to mention what it would add to the run-off and standing water problem. Striping would not be practical without adding pavement, but signing of the bike path definitely should be done. And drivers tend to drive more slowly and carefully because of the congestion and number of people using the roads, especially in the summer. If after further investigation there is deemed to be enough ROW and it is the will of the Council, we could widen the road as funds allow it. However, at this time I think it is more practical to extend the sidewalk on Main Street the entire length of the road, and recreational bicyclists and walkers will be more safe as will drivers.

The State's North Carolina Bike Route #3 is partly routed along Sunset Boulevard and then along Shoreline Drive West, and the more experienced bicyclist will have no compunctions about biking on the road itself, whereas the young family vacationing here would no doubt make use of a sidewalk on Sunset Boulevard instead (est. cost \$138,000 versus \$658,000 for widening the pavement by four feet). While biking on sidewalks is not officially encouraged, just about everyone understands that walkers share sidewalks with recreational bicyclists. And experienced bikers will have no fear of using a share-the-road bike trail along Sunset Boulevard, or along East Shoreline either. There is no increased Town liability arising from the bike trail in a "share the road" concept on a narrower street according to the Town Attorney as it is clear to bicyclists and drivers that the road is shared by both. This is, in fact, common in many communities. A bike is, after all, a vehicle and has as much right to the road as a car.

So, at this time I recommend that we build sidewalks for walkers and recreational bicyclists and only sign the designated bike paths just to provide a little more protection for those experienced bicyclists who are comfortable biking in that fashion.