

Why does Folsom need a Bicycle Master Plan?

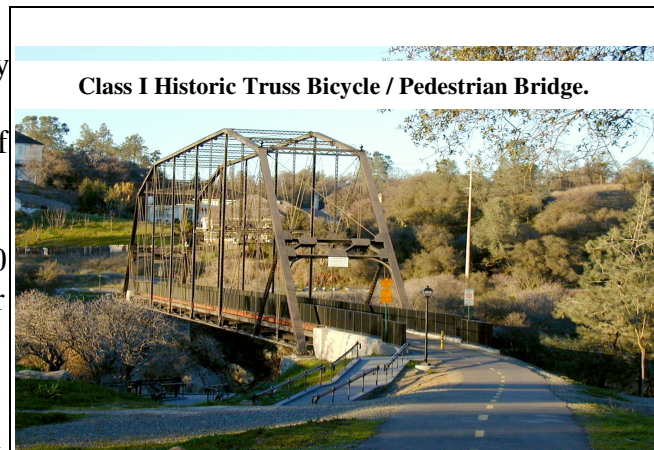
Folsom enjoys one of the finest settings in California, adjacent to Lake Folsom to the north, the American River traversing through the west, cradled by the Sierra Nevada to the east, and the state capitol is nearby to the west. Residents of the city have access to the foothills, mountains, rivers and creeks, and regional recreation resources such as Lake Natoma, Folsom Lake State Recreation Area, and Auburn State Recreation Area. The City is also a transportation hub, with U.S. Highway 50 at the City's doorstep, and Folsom Boulevard, a major tourist route to Folsom Lake State Recreation Area. The City is connected to other regional centers by scheduled transit service provided by the Sacramento County Transit Authority (Regional Transit) and the Folsom Stageline Commuter Service. A regional airport is located in nearby Sacramento at the Sacramento International Airport.

Historically life and work in Folsom have centered on local employers such as the Folsom State Prison, with some commuting to Sacramento. In recent times the City has grown tremendously along with the entire Sacramento region. People move to Folsom seeking a less hectic lifestyle, or to find employment in Folsom's expanding job base. With the emergence of large-scale commercial and service industries, smaller services and other employers, life in Folsom continues to change.

Why does Folsom need a Bicycle System Master Plan? One reason is the continuing growth of this residential community. Simply put, residents and visitors alike desire to get out of their cars and walk and bicycle to the many destinations in Folsom including the historic downtown and new retail centers. In order to attract and extend the stay of visitors, the bicycling environment in Folsom must be enhanced.

Another reason is the enjoyment and quality of life for the residents of Folsom. Since bicycling is one of the most popular forms of recreational activity in the United States (with 46% of Americans bicycling for pleasure), we can estimate that about 27,000 residents in Folsom like to bicycle purely for pleasure.

Safety and convenience are the primary reasons to guide the improvement in bicycle conditions in Folsom. Concerns about safety are the single greatest reason people do not commute by bicycle, according to a 1991 Lou Harris Poll. Addressing those concerns for bicyclists through physical and program



improvements is another major objective of the Master Plan.

Five Key areas that Folsom needs to focus its attention to Improve Upon the overall Bikeway System?

In October 2003 the City of Folsom was designated as a Bicycle Friendly Community by League of American Bicyclists. The City received the Silver award level, which was awarded to only ten other cities in the nation. The next step for the City is to reach the Gold level. There are five core areas that the City needs to focus on to achieve the Gold level and ultimately providing a City with a balanced Transportation System. The five items include:

Safety, Access, Regional Connectivity, Quality of Life, and Effective Implementation are imperative elements for Folsom's success as a bicycle-friendly city.

1.) Safety is the number one concern of citizens, whether they are recreational or bicycle commuters. For the most part bicyclists can use back streets or off-road facilities to avoid traffic in the city's most congested areas. However, a consistent bicycle network with either bike lanes or wider curb lanes and signing is generally lacking in the city. In many instances historic design decisions have been made to increase vehicular traffic capacity and speeds at the expense of bicyclists. The city has made excellent progress in its off road bike path system, and installing bike lanes on new streets as they are built.

2.) Access for bicyclists to shopping, work, recreation, school, and other destinations with secure bike parking is vital to encouraging more people to choose their bicycle as a commute alternative. The sheer volume of traffic on arterial streets and at signalized intersections hampers movement across these streets. Mid-block crossings on these streets and to Old Town Folsom continue to be a problem for bicyclists.

3.) Regional Connectivity is critical in creating a comprehensive bikeway network between adjacent communities. These connections in the bikeway system enable bicyclists to access many destinations within the City of Folsom and beyond to El Dorado Hills, Folsom Lake State Park Recreation areas, and even downtown Sacramento. This plan makes every effort to provide regional connections through close coordination with adjacent jurisdictions. Improving the regional connectivity of our Class I and Class II bikeway system will encourage more people to use their bicycle rather than relying on their automobile.

4.) This Plan urges Folsom to take measurable steps toward the goal of improving every

Folsom citizen's *Quality of Life*, creating a more sustainable environment, reducing traffic congestion, vehicle exhaust emissions, noise, and energy consumption. The importance of developing a bicycle system that is attractive and inviting is a key element in marketing Folsom as a city where people want to live, work, and visit. The attractiveness of the environment not only invites bicyclists to explore Folsom, but more importantly, a beautiful environment helps to improve the overall quality of life in Folsom.

5.) Education, enforcement, engineering, and funding are the basic components of an Effective Implementation Program for this Master Plan. Education must be targeted to the bicyclist as well as to the motorist regarding the rights and responsibilities of the bicyclist, pedestrian, and automobile driver. Comprehensive enforcement of existing traffic and parking laws, coupled with the implementation of sound design and engineering principles for bike corridors is also critical. This plan also proposes systematic review of all new development projects, including public works efforts, to assure compliance with planning and building codes and the principles of this Master Plan. Finally, this plan proposes an aggressive strategy for obtaining grants and competing for other funding sources in order to realize the physical improvements identified as the highest priorities.

Expected Benefits of the Bicycle Master Plan

Improve Safety. Reduce the accident rate for bicyclists through implementation of design standards and guidelines, education, and enforcement of the cyclist and motorist.

Provide needed facilities and services. Meet the demand and increased use of bicycles as a means of travel around the city and secure and convenient bike parking. The current number of regular commuter cyclists in the City is estimated at 110 in 2007. With a goal of doubling bicycling by 2012, the bicycle commute share is estimated to be about 220 bicycle commuters Citywide.

Improve the quality of life in Folsom. Design and build "Complete Streets" that are people-friendly and paths, trails, and activity centers available to everyone, and support sustainable community development. Help reduce automobile trips, traffic congestion, vehicle exhaust emissions, and noise. Encourage visitors to stop and enjoy Folsom on bicycle.

Maximize funding sources for implementation. Equip Folsom to successfully compete for state and federal funding, by meeting the requirements of the California Bicycle Transportation Act and the Transportation Equity Act (TEA 21).

Major Recommendations of the Bicycle Master Plan

Major recommendations of the Plan for the top bike projects to be implemented in the short term (the next 5 years) include:

1. Signal timing improvements at priority intersections.
2. Upgrade older arterial and collector streets to provide more consistent Class II bike lane widths and remove gaps in the overall Class II network.
3. Determine feasibility and pursue funding for a Bike Boulevard on Natoma Station Drive, Wales Drive, Coloma Street, Dean Way and School Street.
4. Provide consistent implementation of bike lane striping at intersections, specifically placing bike lanes to the left of the right turn only lane, per ASHSTO standards.
5. Improve Folsom Rail Trail connections at intersections along Folsom Blvd. Current connections to crosswalk are inconsistent and are difficult to negotiate.
6. Implement a Citywide comprehensive “Share the Road” program.
7. Provide continuous Class II bike lanes on East Natoma Street from Folsom Boulevard to Blue Ravine Road.
8. Coordinate efforts between the Folsom Police Department and the Folsom Cordova School District to develop a consistent Bike Education and Safe Routes to School Program at Folsom schools.
9. Improve bike parking availability at light rail stations and other public facilities.
10. Develop a bike hazard reporting program to respond to hazards reported on bikeways in a consistent and timely basis.
11. Work with Streets Division to reevaluate current street sweeping schedule to focus more on arterial streets and less frequent sweeping on collector and low volume residential streets.
12. Establish criteria for accommodating bicyclists through construction zones.
13. Incorporate “best practices” for bicycle accommodation, both on and off street, into development guidelines for land to be annexed south of Hwy 50.