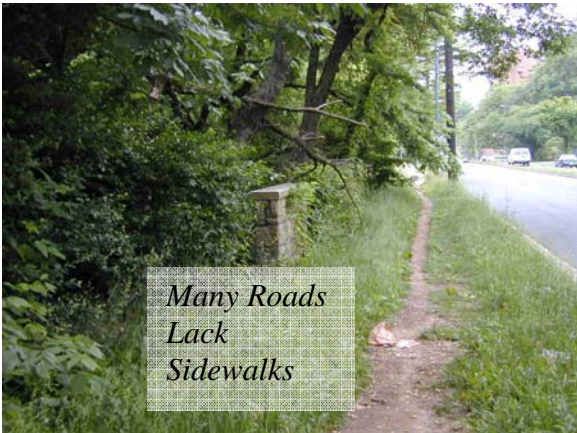


Overview

Across the region conditions for bicycling and walking vary at least as much as the number of people bicycling and walking. The region has excellent long-distance separated facilities, and an urban core and certain regional activity centers that have good pedestrian and bicycle facilities. On the other hand, much of the region is built at low density, often around cul-de-sacs, and lacks safe bicycle or pedestrian facilities, safe ways to cross the major roads, or destinations within reasonable walking distance even if facilities existed. Sidewalk systems are incomplete, even in areas with considerable pedestrian activity. Some activity centers such as Tyson's Corner have developed to fairly high density, yet lack facilities for walking and bicycling, and rely upon the automobile for internal circulation.



Bicycle connections with transit are generally good, with bicycle parking, bus bicycle racks, and bikes permitted on metrorail at most hours. Walking is the primary mode of access to transit, but conditions for pedestrian access are uneven.

Shared-Use Paths

The Washington region is renowned for the quality and extent of its major shared-use paths. Shared-use paths are typically located in their own right-of-way, often a canal, railway, or stream valley, or in the right-of-way of a limited-access highway or parkway, such as the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The region has approximately 190 miles of major shared-use path, either paved or level packed gravel surface suitable for road bikes. Well-known trails include the W&OD and Mount Vernon Trails in Virginia, and the C&O Canal, Capital Crescent, and Rock Creek Trails connecting the District of Columbia and Maryland. Many of the region's shared-use paths go through heavily populated areas, connect major employment centers, and get significant commuter traffic. More information on trails in the Washington region can be found at <http://www.bikewashington.org>.

The region continues to build new trails along stream valleys and in conjunction with major highway projects, but there is not a large remaining inventory of the disused rail lines which



often provide the best opportunities for shared-use paths.

Side-Paths

Side-paths differ from shared-use paths in that they do not have their own right of way, but are closely adjacent to a roadway, and thus subject to more frequent conflict with driveways, side streets, and turning traffic. Side-paths differ from sidewalks in that they must be at least eight feet wide and paved with asphalt.

The Washington region has approximately 300 miles of side-paths. Montgomery County and VDOT's Northern Virginia office have ambitious plans to expand accommodations for cyclists and pedestrians, including side-paths, so the regional mileage of side-paths is likely to grow considerably.



The AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities offers a number of cautions regarding the use of side-paths or wide sidewalks for bicycles. Frequent driveways, especially with poor sightlines, are hazardous to bicycles on side-paths. Side-paths remove bicyclists from the motorists' line of sight and allow travel against the flow of traffic, so they may increase the potential for conflicts with motor vehicles at intersections. Since the facility is shared with pedestrians, there is also a potential for cyclist-pedestrian crashes.

In recognition of the fact that fast-moving cyclists may be better off with an on-road facility, Montgomery County is planning many of its bicycle routes as dual facilities, with both an on-road bike lane and a side-path for pedestrians and slow bicyclists. VDOT's Northern Virginia Bikeway and Regional Trail Study recommends that both on and off-road accommodation be provided.¹ Under the new routine accommodation policy, VDOT is to provide adequate facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists even if not called for in the local plan.

Bicycle Lanes

Far less expensive than separated paths are on-street bicycle lanes. Bicycle lanes are marked lanes at least 4' wide in the public right-of-way that are by law exclusively for use by bicyclists. Bike lanes are usually marked with bicycle symbols and arrows, which emphasize the correct direction of travel. Bike lanes encourage cyclists to ride in the correct direction, define the road space that cyclists are expected to use, increase cyclists comfort level, and call attention to the presence of cyclists on the roadway. Bicycle lanes are not generally considered safe or adequate for pedestrians, though in rural areas

¹ *Northern Virginia Regional Bikeway and Trail Network Study*. November, 2003. Virginia Department of Transportation, Northern District Office. Page 19.

where sidewalks are lacking the roadway shoulder serves as both a bicycle lane and as a pedestrian facility.



The region has relatively few bicycle lanes, the bulk of which are located in the District of Columbia and Arlington County. The District of Columbia currently has 19 miles of bicycle lanes, up from 2 in 1995, and Arlington County has 20 miles, up from 3 in 1995. The regional mileage of bicycle lanes can be expected to expand significantly in the future as the District of Columbia, Arlington County, and Montgomery County all have ambitious plans to expand their bicycle lane mileage. A map of

regional bicycle paths, lanes, and on-road routes can be ordered at www.adcmap.com.

Signed Bicycle Routes

The region has hundreds of miles of signed bicycle routes. Signed routes have the advantage of being inexpensive and informative for cyclists who may learn of a route they had been unaware of. A signed route has not necessarily had any improvements apart from signing.

Bridges

Currently the southernmost opportunity for cyclists and pedestrians to cross the Potomac is at the 14th Street Bridge. When the Woodrow Wilson Bridge project is finished, bicyclists and pedestrians will be able to cross the Potomac on the capitol beltway at Alexandria. The Memorial Bridge, the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge, the Key Bridge, and the Chain Bridge all have bicycle and pedestrian facilities. To the north cyclists and pedestrians may use the ferry at White's Ferry, which connects Montgomery County and Loudoun County. Cyclists may use the bridge at Point of Rocks connecting Frederick County with Loudoun County, though it has no separated facility.

On the Anacostia separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities of varying quality are available on the South Capitol Street (Frederick Douglas Memorial) bridge, the 11th Street bridge, the East Capitol Street Bridge, and the Benning Road Bridge.

Bicycles and Public Transit

The region has made tremendous progress integrating bicycling and public transit, with secure bike parking available at most rail stations, bicycles permitted on metrorail at most times, and most of the buses in the region now equipped with bicycle racks. Specific agency policies and facilities are described below.

Rail

Bicycles are allowed on Metrorail at any time except weekdays from 7 to 10 a.m. and 4 to 7 p.m., and Fourth of July. No permit is required. Only folding bicycles fully enclosed in a carrying case are permitted on MARC and VRE.

Bicycle racks or lockers are available at most Metrorail stations. Table 3-1 in appendix F shows the number of lockers and rack spaces at each metro station. As of April, 2004 WMATA had 1,141 locker and 1,183 rack bicycle parking spaces at metrorail stations. Racks are first-come, first served.²

All VRE stations and most MARC stations have bicycle racks.

Bus

Metrobuses all have racks on the front that carry not more than two bicycles. No permit is required. Information on how to use bus bike racks is available at www.waba.org.

Montgomery County Ride-On, Arlington Transit, and Annapolis Transit buses are all equipped with bicycle racks, as are many Maryland Transit Administration buses.

Park and Ride

Of the 175 park and ride lots in the Washington DC-MD-VA Metropolitan Statistical Area, about 50 have bike lockers or racks.

Pedestrian Access to Transit

82% of metrobus passengers walk to transit, and 60% of all metrorail trips start with the passenger walking to the rail station. However, the quality of pedestrian access to metrorail and metrobus is uneven. Many rail stations were built with an emphasis on motor vehicle access. Bus stops are often placed in areas with no sidewalks or available crosswalks. Inventorying conditions and making recommendations for specific locations is beyond the scope of this plan, but there have been a number of efforts to do so, such as MTA's Access 2000 Study, the MWCOG's Walkable Communities Workshops, the efforts of the Bike Parking Work Group of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee, and efforts in Fairfax County and Montgomery County to improve bus stop safety.

² Details on bicycle parking locations and locker rental can be found at <http://www.wmata.com/metrorail/bikeracks.cfm>