



## Chapter 1 – Introduction

### Vision Statement

By their nature, cities grow and change over time. With nearly 300 years under its belt, the City of New Bern has certainly seen significant changes – not only in community size and physical characteristics, but also in economic factors, in various types of cultural opportunities, and in transportation. This extensive history gives New Bern a unique perspective on the needs of the community,



having been constantly assessing and addressing those needs for so long. As the City prepares for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding, it is an excellent time to consider how New Bern will look in the future.

The impact of transportation on New Bern will be particularly important to consider in the coming years. As people seek ways to enjoy more of their communities and travel more efficiently, it is valuable to consider the bicycle as an important component in meeting those needs.

This bicycle plan balances several responsibilities. It identifies the specific needs in the community, a vision for the future, the investment opportunities and financial realities, and a disciplined investment strategy.

The City of New Bern’s vision for a *Comprehensive Bicycle Plan* includes:

- A safe and convenient system that connects with the three adjacent

communities of Trent Woods, James City, and Bridgeton

- Local ordinances and design standards, so that future development is bike-friendly
- An increase in bicycle awareness through strong public outreach programs, bicycle advocacy groups, and educational programs
- The involvement of partners (such as the NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation, the NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch, and the New Bern City Police Department’s Bicycle Unit) in education and safety programs like helmet laws, bike laws, and Safe Routes to School programs

### History

#### *Bicycling in America*

Bicycles became popular in America in the late 1800s as a practical and relatively inexpensive means of short-range travel for work or recreation. Although bicycles were originally intended as transportation only for adults, designers eventually found a market with younger riders and began manufacturing smaller models. People of all age groups and social and economic backgrounds enjoyed cycling. Bicycles soon joined carriages, horses, streetcars, and pedestrians on city streets as regular forms of transportation, and had an important role in civic services such as law enforcement.

As the automobile became more popular and affordable, however, automobiles began to replace bicycles as a major mode of transportation. Yet the bicycle was still widely used for recreation and a popular





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means of transportation for children and teenagers. As vehicular traffic increased, bicycle safety became important to cyclists, automobile drivers, police, and highway authorities.

The bicycle reached a new status in North Carolina in 1929 when the General Assembly legally defined the bicycle as a vehicle and gave it the same status as motor vehicles on North Carolina highways.

More recently, in 1974, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the *Bicycle and Bikeways Act*, establishing one of the first statewide bicycle program in the United States. This act authorized the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to carry out comprehensive bicycle planning and programming. The NCDOT continues to promote a positive environment for bicyclists and accomplish goals established by the 1974 Act through efforts of the Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation.

Federal legislation in the 1990s introduced major changes in transportation planning ideas and methodologies for state and local officials. The federal 1992 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) allowed more local involvement in the project planning phases to make sure that federal funding was allocated to the most important community priorities. ISTEA and TEA-21 encouraged the development of safe and efficient multimodal transportation facilities, including bicycle facilities and provisions. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) passed in 2005 continues this trend.

## The Bicycle's Role in New Bern

Founded in 1710, New Bern is the second oldest city in North Carolina. Bicycles as a means of transportation and recreation have long played a role throughout the City of New Bern's rich history. The *Illustrated City of New Bern, North Carolina, 1914* includes a description of two very successful cycle shops, L.H. Cannon Cycle Company and Gaskins Cycle Company, located in Downtown New Bern.

Looking at more recent history, previous efforts make this bicycle plan more than just a passing whim. The *City of New Bern 2004 Comprehensive Plan* calls for the development of a bicycle plan that includes economic development components and elements of connectivity, and addresses other fundamental elements such as public facilities, greenways, and open space. The City's CAMA Land Use Plan also discusses the necessity of including comprehensive bicycle planning for the city.

## Benefits of Bicycling

Today, bicycling as a primary means of transportation is widely popular in densely populated cities around the world. Sometimes commuters find cycling more efficient, affordable, and convenient than traveling by automobile on congested urban streets. Although most people choose to travel by cars and trucks in the United States, bicycling is still the first — and sometimes the only — choice for some people.

Bicycling is recognized to be an appealing alternative to traveling by car because of the benefits it offers, including:

- ***It represents the "livability" of a place.*** Being able to reach a destination via bicycle gives people another alternative





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for choosing a travel mode. It combines the functionality of actually getting there with the benefits of exercise and recreation. In places where residents are regularly seen outside walking or bicycling, visitors feel a sense of community and safety there. A city with great “livability” constantly attracts new residents and businesses.

- **It is efficient and environmentally-friendly.** Cyclists power the machines themselves and do not use fossil fuels. Since bicycles do not release polluting emissions into the air and run on gears versus engine power, both air and noise qualities are improved.
- **Bicycling promotes good health practices.** The United States Surgeon General advises Americans to get 30-60 minutes of exercise 4 to 6 times each week. Bicycling is a low-impact way to exercise and can improve a person’s health by lowering blood pressure, strengthening muscles, lowering stress levels, increasing the size, strength, and efficiency of the heart and cardiovascular system, burning fat, and increasing metabolism.
- **The economics of bicycling make sense.** According to a study by the Boston Foundation, in 2003, typical American households spent an average of \$7,125 on transportation costs, including insurance, repair, maintenance, fuel costs, taxes, and other fees — a significant annual investment. The average cyclist spends only \$120 per year on bicycle costs. Choosing to ride a bicycle versus the bus or personal

It is the goal of this plan to chart the future of bicycling in New Bern boldly through specific projects and programs, while committing resources wisely.

automobile could save one person thousands of dollars in a single year.

- **Bicyclists can generally avoid traffic congestion.** Since a bicycle only takes up about a quarter of the physical space that the average car does, cyclists can maneuver more easily through traffic in urban areas. Often, cyclists can use dedicated bicycle lanes or greenways, which allow for an even more efficient trip.
- **It is easy.** According to a 1995 National Personal Transportation Survey, analysts found that approximately 40 percent of all trips made are less than 2 miles in distance from origin to destination. Most bicyclists can make that level of trip in approximately ten minutes.

## Types of Cyclists

In order to develop an appropriate bicycle element of a transportation plan, the following “ABCs” of cyclists need to be understood.

**Advanced Cyclists** — These are usually experienced cyclists who have the ability to safely ride under more typical thoroughfare conditions of higher traffic volume and speed. This group of cyclists generally prefers shared roadways as opposed to striped bike lanes and paths. Although surveys show this group represents only about 20 percent of all cyclists, they also show that these cyclists ride about 80 percent of the bicycle miles traveled yearly. With monthly street sweeping of gutter





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debris, advanced cyclists typically accept striped bike lanes.

**Basic Cyclists** — These cyclists are casual or new adult and teenage riders less secure in their ability to ride in traffic without special accommodations. They typically prefer bike paths and bike lanes on collector or arterial streets with less exposure to fast-moving and heavy traffic. Surveys of the cycling public indicate that 80 percent of cyclists can be categorized as basic cyclists.

**Child Cyclists** — This group, which is a subset of the basic cyclists, includes children (aged 12 and under) on bicycles who have a more limited field of vision as they ride. This group generally keeps to neighborhood streets, sidewalks, and greenways. When children venture out onto busier roadways, they typically stay on sidewalks or bicycle facilities that keep them safely away from traffic. Given the comfort level of these cyclists, it is recommended that areas in New Bern lacking bike lanes allow children and other cyclists who are uncomfortable riding in traffic to ride on sidewalks with the requirement that they yield to pedestrians.

Cyclists, not unlike drivers, generally become more experienced over time and miles of riding. As cyclists ride and gain more experience operating in traffic, they eventually graduate from the classification of a basic cyclist to an advanced cyclist more capable of operating under typical roadway conditions.

In New Bern, three distinct groups are representative of the majority of the bicycling population. Captive riders are those without access to a motor vehicle who as a result



*This cyclist fails to observe several basic safety measures and rules of the road.*

rely on bicycling, transit, and foot travel to get around. These groups are primarily situated within the city limits in the neighborhoods surrounding the downtown. The next group consists of recreational riders, who may not be long-distance or advanced riders, but are interested in bicycling for exercise or as an occasional outdoor activity. The third

group represented in New Bern consists of more serious riders, who ride long distances and often ride in touring groups. New Bern is home to many serious riders due to its favorable terrain and climate. Bicycling groups and focus areas are discussed in more detail in **Chapter 3**.

## Goals and Objectives

The old adage “if we fail to plan, then we plan to fail” is certainly true for the development of this bicycle plan. With the end goals in mind, it was easier to develop a plan that will succeed in the context of this community. **It is the goal of this plan to chart the future of bicycling in New Bern boldly through specific projects and programs, while committing resources wisely.**

Through regular meetings with an advisory committee and public workshops, the public expressed their interests in the bicycle plan’s goals and objectives. Using a survey, participants indicated their concern with several issues related to biking, including:

- Lack of bike lanes, trails, and paths
- Lack of education and awareness on part of both driver and cyclist





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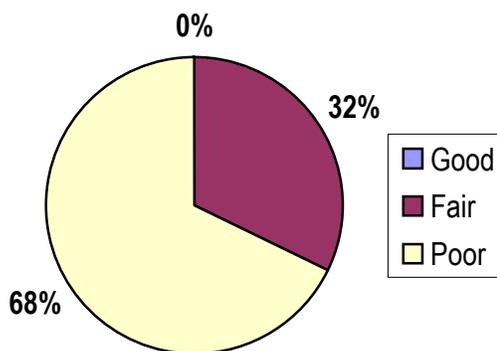
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- Lack of paved, clean shoulders and safe roadways
- Failure to incorporate biking needs into public/private development standards
- Presence of potholes, road obstructions, broken pavement, and debris

One of the questions drawing an interesting response asked participants to rate bicycling conditions in New Bern as good, fair, or poor. There were no respondents that felt bicycling conditions were good in New Bern. In fact, over two-thirds of the respondents answered that they felt bicycling conditions were poor in this area. This is a clear indication that steps need to be taken to improve the bicycling environment in New Bern. The survey and significant findings are included in the **Appendix**.

**Figure 1.1 Bicycling Conditions in New Bern Survey Response**



In addition, survey participants were asked what they felt the barriers were to bicycling in New Bern. Responses included such items as a lack of education and awareness of drivers and cyclists; lack of paved shoulders, bike lanes, and dedicated paths; and poorly

maintained roadways, bridges, and narrow roads. This plan will seek to address these issues through its recommendations and implementation strategies.

To achieve this goal, these concerns were taken into consideration as several short- and long-range goals were developed for New Bern.

### Short-Range:

- Organize periodic events that encourage new riders and promote safety
- Pursue funds to construct high priority facilities

### Long-Range:

- Increase the number of people who regularly bicycle
- Increase public awareness of bicycling as a viable mode of travel
  - Promote the rights and responsibilities of bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists in a shared transportation network while improving safety and enforcement
  - Modify public policy to include provisions for bicycles through design standards, education initiatives, and enforcement and encouragement programs
  - Ensure bicycle accommodations are considered, where consistent with the plan, in a balanced approach to planning and funding transportation projects
- Create additional physical activity opportunities in New Bern, increasing physical and mental wellness, as well as improving air quality for all





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- Provide improved opportunity and access for bicycling to all residents
- Encourage the design, finance, and construction of transportation facilities that provide safe, secure, and efficient linkages for bicyclists throughout the City
- Stimulate the local economy by providing safe and efficient bicycle connectivity between neighborhoods, businesses, recreation areas, and tourist sites
- Encourage safe riding practices on roads and trails
- Promote the development of seamless transitions for all bicycle facilities which cross over the city limit

able to be implemented, are addressed within the following chapters:

- Existing Conditions
- Facility Opportunities and Guidelines
- Recommendations
- Implementation

The *New Bern Comprehensive Bicycle Plan* will encompass the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction of the City of New Bern, as well as addressing connections to the neighboring communities of Trent Woods, James City, and Bridgeton. The study area is shown in **Figure 1.2** on the next page.

## Scope and Purpose of Plan

The *New Bern Comprehensive Bicycle Plan* does not exist in a vacuum, and as a result significant consideration was given to several influential factors. As mentioned previously, this plan addresses several issues. It considers the plans already developed that would impact bicycling in the community, the expectations of current members of the community along with federal and state regulations, and financial constraints and opportunities. It is intended to serve as a master plan for investments of local, state, and federal monies.

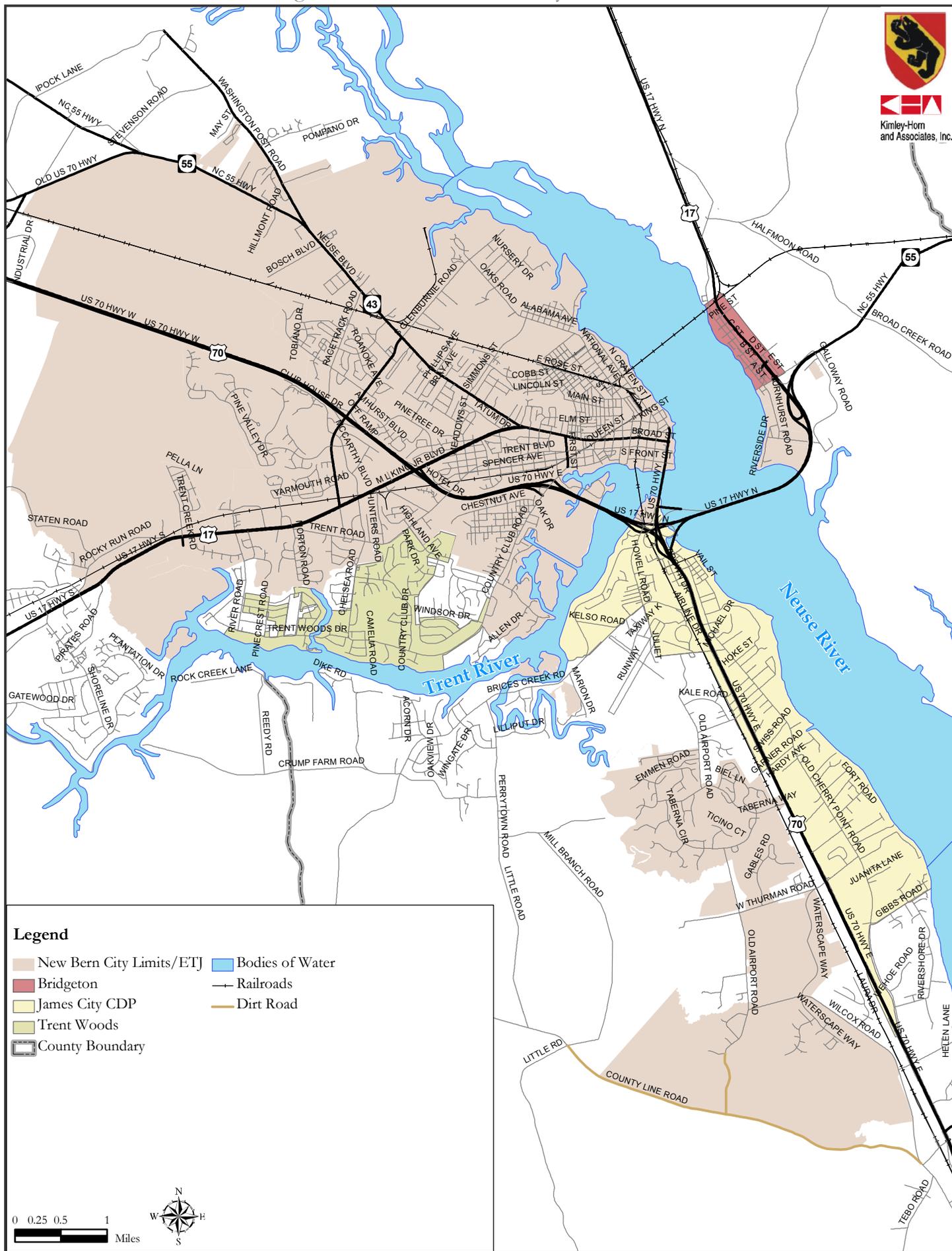
The vision of a connected, financially feasible bicycle plan for New Bern can become a reality. This *New Bern Comprehensive Bicycle Plan* is intended to serve as a tool, guiding the future success of implementing New Bern's bicycle facilities.

This plan includes descriptions of the development of several key plan components. These components, critical to making a plan successful in terms of being



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Figure 1.2 - Study Area



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