

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

Easley is situated in Upstate South Carolina, at the base of the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Pickens County, between Greenville and Clemson. Easley is 10.6 square miles in area with a population of approximately 20,000 residents (2007 US Census estimate) - a 13 percent increase over the 2000 Census figure of 17,754. Local estimates are that the population of Pickens County could increase by 30 percent by 2025. The City is part of the Easley-Laurens-Pickens MSA and is in the Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study (GPATS) MPO, a primary funder of this plan.



Downtown Easley

Easley's history is tied to the Norfolk Southern Railroad line that runs through the center of the City. The City is located midway between the major metropolitan areas of Charlotte, North Carolina to the northeast and Atlanta, Georgia to the southwest, both of which are easily accessible via nearby Interstate 85. Surrounded by rolling mountains and several picturesque lakes, Easley's location provides residents with a number of outdoor recreation opportunities. Easley is home to Baptist Medical Center and has recently gained acclaim for hosting the Big League World Series youth baseball tournament.

The City of Easley recognizes that bicycling and walking are an important part of daily transportation for residents, commuters, and visitors to the city. This Plan is for all residents who desire to improve their level of daily physical activity by bicycling or walking to school, work, and other local destinations; or by going for a walk or bicycle ride to the City's parks, the library, or downtown.

Plan Overview

The goal of this Plan is to provide an assessment of Easley's existing walking and bicycling environment and a prioritized list of projects and strategies for system-wide improvements. The City expects that the plan will become a strong planning tool and that it will facilitate the orderly development of both pedestrian and bicycle modes of transportation. The plan is expected to:



Easley's annual Spring Fling festival featured a bicycle, run, and bike rodeo event this year

- Guide the City in creating a lasting pedestrian and bicycle transportation program;
- Identify convenient on-street and off-street routes for pedestrian walking/jogging and bicycling to important destinations;
- Identify connections to other modes of transportation;
- Address the needs of all ability, age and skill levels;
- Promote safe bicycling and walking and enhance community safety.

This plan considers and incorporates many of the projects proposed in other planning efforts, including the City's *Comprehensive Plan*, *Parks & Recreation Master Plan*, *Transit Feasibility Study*, and the *GPATS Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)*, in addition to other projects and programs that further enhance bicycling and walking in Easley.

Benefits of Walking and Bicycling

Easley residents recognize that walking and bicycling are healthy, efficient, low-cost modes of travel, available to nearly everyone. Walking is the most basic form of transportation. Almost everyone is a pedestrian at some point in the day, since walking is often the quickest way to accomplish short trips in urban areas. Pedestrians also include persons using skateboards, wheelchairs and other forms of mobility devices.

Bicycling also provides many community benefits. Bicycling can help reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and improve physical fitness. Walking and bicycling help **develop and maintain "livable communities,"** make neighborhoods safer and friendlier, save on personal and public transportation costs, and reduce transportation-related environmental impacts, auto emissions, and noise. They create transportation system flexibility by providing transportation choices, particularly in combination with transit systems, to people of all ages, abilities, and income status.

The extent of bicycling and walking in a community has been described as a barometer of how well that community is advancing its citizens' quality of life. Streets that are busy with bicyclists and walkers are working at a human scale, **fostering a sense of neighborhood and community.** Bicycling and walking create opportunities to speak to neighbors and put more "eyes on the street" to discourage crime and violence. Communities with high levels of walking and bicycling often have lower crime rates, and are generally **attractive and friendly places to live.**

Active living that integrates walking and bicycling into daily activities is **critical to improving public health** and reducing South Carolina's obesity crisis. Walking and bicycling are important to the health of all those living and working in Easley, not just to those doing the walking or cycling. People choosing to ride or walk rather than drive may be replacing short automobile trips, which contribute disproportionately high amounts of pollutant emissions to the environment. Since bicycling and walking contribute little pollution, require no external energy source, and use land efficiently, they effectively move people from one place to another with few adverse environmental impacts.

Bicycling and walking require less space and infrastructure compared with automobile facilities. Improvements made for bicyclists often result in **better conditions for other transportation facility users** as well. For instance, paved shoulders, wide curb lanes, and bicycle lanes not only provide improved conditions for bicyclists, but also create a safe location for



Walking and bicycling help increase physical fitness and create attractive places.

disabled vehicles to stop, can reduce traffic speeds, and provide additional turning room for motor vehicles, among other benefits.

Walking and bicycling are also **good choices for families**. Bicycles enable young people to explore their neighborhoods, visit places without being driven by their parents, and experience the freedom of personal decision-making. More children bicycling and walking can mean fewer trips by car. In turn, this means less traffic congestion around schools and in the community, and less time parents spend driving their children.

In addition to walking, bicycling is also within reach for many people who cannot afford an automobile or cannot legally drive due to age or physical limitations. Typically, a third of a community's population is non-drivers for one or more of these reasons. In Easley, as of the 2000 Census, nearly 24 percent of the City's population was under 18 and more than 8 percent of the City's households did not own a car, as shown in Figure 1-1



Facilities such as roadway shoulders accommodate bicycle travel and provide a safe location for disabled vehicles to stop

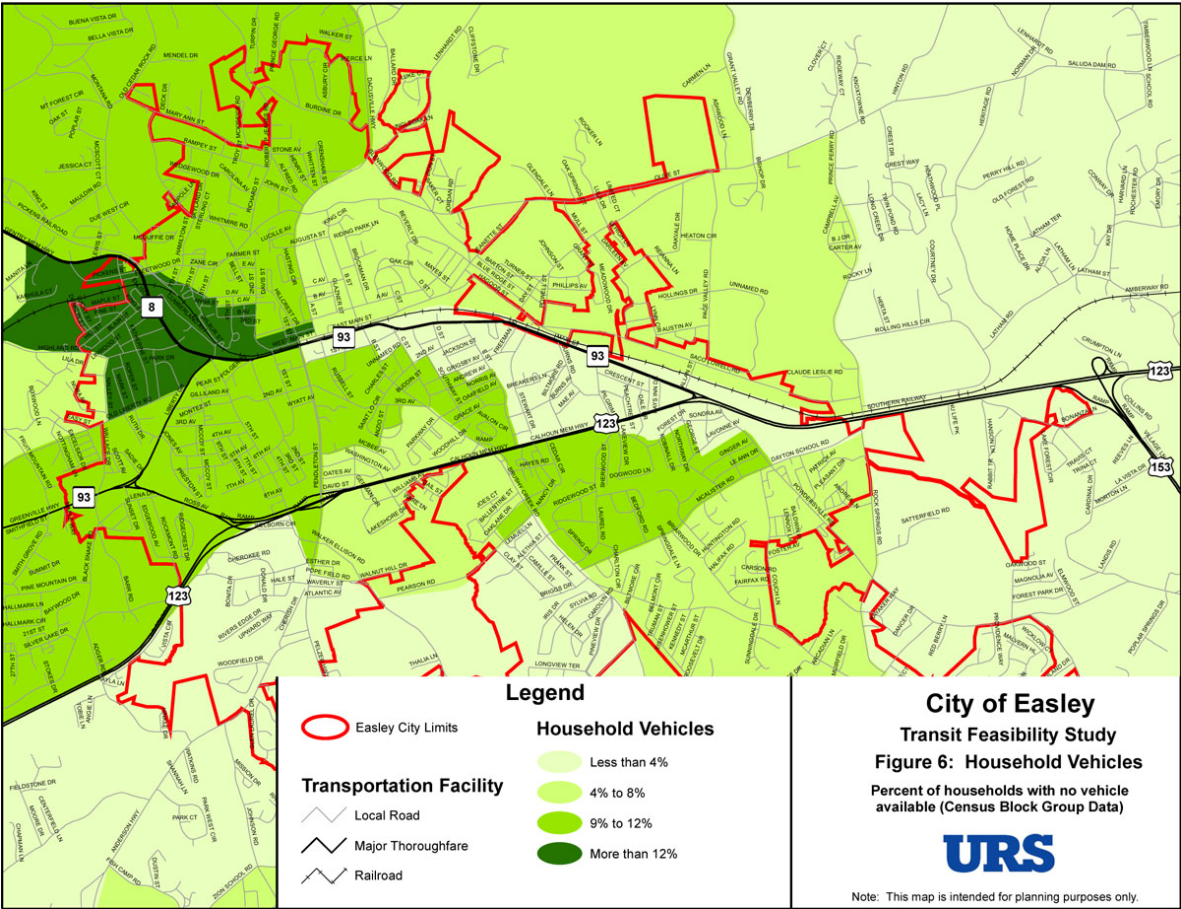


Figure 1-1. Percent of Easley Households with No Motor Vehicle Available
(Source: US Census as reported in City of Easley Transit Feasibility Study)

Vision Statements, Objectives, and Strategies

Vision Statements and Objectives

The following vision statements and sample objectives were **drafted by members of the plan advisory committee** and confirmed by members of the general public who participated in the plan. The vision statements represent the intent of this plan and the long-range vision for walking and bicycling in Easley. These statements reflect local commitment to improving walking and bicycling. They also provide policy guidance for implementation after the plan is complete.

The **bulleted objectives below are *examples* of implementing strategies or actions suggested by the committee** and represent a range of ideas in various categories, but **not necessarily a complete or exhaustive list of recommendations**. A fully explored list of recommendations is presented in the chapters that follow.

1. The City of Easley will be known as a **fitness-friendly, bicycle-friendly, and walkable community** – a community with strong neighborhood feeling and a place for families, as evidenced by:
 - Recognition as a “fitness-friendly community” by utilizing existing resources and partnerships;
 - Recognition as a “bicycle community” as the City’s image is associated with cycling;
 - Recognition in Bicycling Magazine;
 - Visibility of kids on bikes and people walking, fostering a sense of community/ neighborhood;
 - Consideration of a City employee to act as a bicycle and pedestrian planner;
 - Increasing/improving ordinances for cyclist and pedestrian protection;
 - Instituting a bike share program;
 - Supporting a bike shop in town.

2. Easley will have a **complete network of pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly infrastructure for all abilities and user types** (runners, walkers, families, cyclists of all types) throughout the City and into the region, as evidenced by:
 - Places to ride in City and environs;
 - Regional connections;
 - Bike trail in railroad corridor between Pickens/Easley;
 - Connection to Greenville;
 - Network from downtown;
 - Paths on major roads;
 - More greenways (such as Cleveland Park); places for families;
 - Couch Lane that is better for running/biking.

3. Easley will **support Education, Awareness, and positive attitudes** for bicycling, wellness and physical activity,

including:

- Raising awareness for physical activity;
- Formalizing a Wellness coordinator for the City;
- Educating residents re: safety and other risks [of bicycling and walking].

4. Easley will ensure that current and future generation of pedestrians and cyclists feel safe. This will be evidenced by:

- Increased numbers of pre-drivers biking throughout the City;
- Reduction in motor vehicle speeds;
- Additional places for families to walk/bike;
- Neighborhood shared roadways and bike lanes and sidewalks near schools;
- Mountain bicycling opportunities.

Becoming a Bicycle and a Walk Friendly Community

One of the underlying objectives of this planning process is for Easley to achieve Bicycle Friendly Community status. The Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) campaign is a national awards program that recognizes municipalities that actively support bicycling. A Bicycle-Friendly Community provides safe accommodations for cycling and encourages its residents to bike for transportation and recreation. The Bicycle Friendly Community Campaign is administered by the League of American Bicyclists, an education and advocacy organization working to bring better cycling to communities around the country. The BFC designation is awarded at one of four levels (from lowest to highest): bronze, silver, gold, and platinum. To date, only three communities have achieved platinum status: Portland, OR; Davis, CA; and Boulder, CO. In South Carolina, three communities have been designated Bicycle Friendly Communities: Spartanburg (Bronze, 2007), Columbia (Bronze, 2008) and Greenville (Bronze, 2009). More information on this program and its implementation are provided in Chapter 5.

Beginning in early 2010, a Walk Friendly Community (WFC) award program will be initiated by the Association of Bicycle and Pedestrian Professionals, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, and the National Center for Bicycling and Walking. The implementation of this plan will help Easley receive recognition through the WFC program as well.



Plan Organization

The Easley Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan is organized as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction**, provides an overview of this Plan and its purpose.
- **Chapter 2: Existing Conditions**, describes Easley's existing walkway and bikeway network, summarizing destinations and opportunities for bicycle lanes, and uses an analytical model to estimate current bicycling and walking demand and to predict future demand.
- **Chapter 3: Recommended Pedestrian and Bicycle Network**, depicts the recommended system of on- and off-street walkways and bikeways, along with more in-depth Top-Tier project descriptions and Safe Routes to School recommendations.
- **Chapter 4: Design Guidelines and Standards**, presents design guidelines from local, state and national best practices for various bicycle and pedestrian facility types.
- **Chapter 5: Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety, Marketing, and Education Guidelines**, describes education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation measures the City and/or other local agencies should implement to promote walking and bicycling, to increase bicyclist and pedestrian safety, and to increase the awareness of walking and bicycling as viable travel modes.
- **Chapter 6: Financial Resources and Funding**, identifies potential funding strategies and supporting policies for the recommended infrastructure improvements and program recommendations.
- **Chapter 7: Implementation Plan**, presents evaluation criteria for prioritizing facilities and programs, defines the methodology for developing a phased implementation approach, and provides cost opinions for the recommended pedestrian and bicycle projects and programs and maintenance.
- **Appendices** at the end of this Plan include a more detailed discussion of public outreach, an analysis of previous crash data, a review of plans, policies, guidelines and standards that impact the implementation of this Plan, and a discussion of the potential traffic impacts of recommended projects.

Public Involvement

Public and stakeholder input provided the basis for developing the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan recommendations. The public involvement element included five primary mechanisms in order to achieve the broadest possible local input:

1. **A City-appointed Advisory Committee:** In September, 2008 Mayor Bagwell established a committee to make the City of Easley a Bicycle Friendly Community. From that declaration an advisory committee was developed including members of the City of Easley's Recreation Committee, as well as several members from the Easley community. The City-appointed Plan Advisory Committee provided oversight in the Plan's development and information on the existing pedestrian and bicycle network; contribute ideas for system improvements; and assisted in getting the word out about the plan effort to the broader community. The consultant team met with the Advisory Committee throughout the plan development process to get direction on plan recommendations and to determine local priorities.
2. **Stakeholder Interviews:** The consultant team interviewed various agency stakeholders in the course of developing the plan recommendations, including GPATS, Pickens County Schools, Pickens County and Easley school administrators, South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) staff, Pickens County, Easley Combined

Utilities, Easley Park & Recreation staff, Easley Public Works staff, Pickens Railroad, Easley Chamber of Commerce, and the YMCA, as well as local walking and bicycling enthusiasts.

3. **Public Workshops:** Two public outreach events were held to solicit community input. The first public workshop was held in June 2009 to provide opportunities for residents to define issues and opportunities for Easley's existing walking and bicycling environment, and to also offer suggestions for making the system better. More than 20 people representing a broad spectrum of ages and interests – from high school students to retired residents – and community leaders from various local organizations including City Council, the YMCA, and the Chamber of Commerce attended the event. A second public meeting was held in October 2009 to present draft recommendations for public feedback. More than 45 people attend the second workshop. The project team catalogued all comments from these events and made recommendations and changes to the plan based on the public input. A summary of the public feedback is included in Chapter 2. A complete list of the public feedback is included in Appendix A. Additionally, the consultant team made a presentation on the plan effort to the Easley Rotary Club in July 2009.
4. **A Community-wide survey:** The consultant team developed an online and paper survey regarding local pedestrian and bicycle priorities, which was available from April 28 through June 20, 2009. The hard copy survey was available at the Spring Fling event, at City Hall, at the Hampton Memorial Library, and at the Easley Branch of the YMCA. The electronic survey was available on the project website and was also distributed by e-mail to residents and stakeholders by members of the Advisory Committee. Over 200 persons responded to the survey. A summary of survey results are included in the textboxes in Chapter 2, while a complete list of survey results can be found in Appendix A. The survey results were used to inform the recommendations in this plan and are referenced throughout the plan.
5. **Project website:** Prior to commencement of the plan, the Advisory Committee and local volunteers developed a slogan, a graphic, and a webpage on the City's website. The webpage (accessible at www.walkeasley.com or www.bikeeasley.com) provided a venue for information about the planning process, project updates, and a forum for public comments. After this plan is complete, the website will continue to be a resource for plan implementation and community information regarding walking and cycling in Easley.



Bikeeasily.com/walkeasley.com webpage

Easley, SC Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Public Survey

1. In the last 6 months, how often did you walk (for commuting, recreation, errands, etc)?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Never <input type="checkbox"/>	6.0%	12
Less than once a month <input type="checkbox"/>	7.5%	15
Less than once a week <input type="checkbox"/>	19.0%	38
Less than once a day <input type="checkbox"/>	25.0%	50
Nearly every day <input type="checkbox"/>	42.5%	85
	answered question	200
	skipped question	3

2. Why do you walk (check all that apply)		
	Response Percent	Response Count
For exercise/health <input type="checkbox"/>	88.7%	180
For pleasure <input type="checkbox"/>	57.1%	116
For shopping/errands <input type="checkbox"/>	18.2%	37
To get to work <input type="checkbox"/>	1.5%	3
To get to school <input type="checkbox"/>	1.5%	3
I don't walk much <input type="checkbox"/>	7.4%	15
Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/>	6.4%	13
	answered question	203
	skipped question	0

Page from the online survey