Executive Summary

In 2012, the City of Columbus will celebrate its bicentennial. This event provides a historic opportunity for developing innovative solutions that build upon the city's past and create a better future. The bicycle is a symbol of these efforts – a vehicle with significant potential to help meet the City's environmental, mobility, health, economic and social goals. The Bicentennial Bikeways Plan provides a new vision of transportation, recreation and quality of life for Columbus. This vision is connected to the City's Green Initiative, the Commit to Be Fit program, and broader efforts that support a sustainable future. The projects, policies and programs included in this document will provide the City with a lasting legacy for 2012 and beyond.

The Bicentennial Bikeways Plan will create a more livable Columbus by developing a network of on-street bicycle facilities and completing the shared-use path system. The Plan includes a balanced approach to the "Four E's" of Engineering, Education, Encouragement and Enforcement. This approach is based on the League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Communities (BFC) program, and will enable the city to earn national recognition for its innovative efforts. A key to implementing the plan is a new Complete Streets policy, which will enable the City to integrate bicycle facilities into ongoing infrastructure projects.

The bicycle is an important solution as Columbus works to take local action on global issues including climate change, peak oil, the physical inactivity epidemic, the loss of young professionals to other regions, affordable housing, aging in place, and the need to attract businesses to places with a high quality of life. The Bicentennial Bikeways Plan cannot completely solve all of these problems, but it does provide real solutions that work with current technology and can be implemented quickly. According to the 2001 USDOT National Household Travel Survey, nearly half of all trips by car are for distances less than 3 miles – an ideal distance for travel by bicycle. Ohio has adult obesity rates of 24.9 percent, ranking it the 15th heaviest in the nation, according to a 2006 report by Trust for America's Health (TFAH). The Ohio Public Health Association calls childhood overweight and obesity "An Epidemic of Modern Times".

"By implementing the Bicentennial Bikeways Plan, Columbus can shift 10 percent of the city's transportation to bicycling, walking, transit and other transportation options. Ten percent equates to biking to work just 2 days per month.... "2 by 2012" will be a goal that citizens, government and the private sector can achieve together."

Private Sector Commute Options: Employers are choosing to locate their businesses in places that provide a high quality of life. Employees want to be able to enjoy active lifestyles. For example, Humana Healthcare in Louisville provides free bikes to employees to use during the workday.

In the late 1960s Columbus constructed its first shared use paths along the Olentangy and Scioto Rivers to meet the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department's goal to connect its parks with shared use paths. In the late 1980's, when Schrock Road was widened, bike lanes were included. In recent years, bicycle lanes have been installed on Hard Road and Morse Road and bicycle route signs have been posted for several identified bicycle routes. In the past decade, bicycle racks have been added to the local bus fleet. Columbus now has 50 miles of shared use paths along the Olentangy and Scioto Rivers, Alum Creek, and I-670, and 6 miles of bicycle lanes. Other U.S. cities, including Portland, Chicago, and Louisville are implementing ambitious bikeway systems, and Columbus has the potential to be the best bicycling city in the nation.

Green Initiative / Carbon Footprint: Bicycling is an important part of the solution to climate change.

Columbus has unique advantages for being a bicycle friendly city: flat topography, a large college-age population, rivers that run through the city, the state capitol and a large private-sector presence. The new Bicentennial Bikeways Plan is proposed in a series of phases that allow for Columbus to create the new infrastructure and programs as resources and opportunities become available. The Plan calls for the following initiatives:

If people bicycled to work just twice a month, 10 percent of commuter trips will be made by bike.

Complete Streets: Adopt a new City policy consistent with the model adopted by the Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission to integrate bicycle facilities into infrastructure projects.

100 Miles of Bikeways by 2012: Phase one of the plan involves expanding the existing system to 100 miles with 50 miles of new projects created by integrating bike lanes into street paving and construction projects, implementing 'road diets' on streets with extra capacity, and continuing the development of shared use paths using current funding.

200 New Miles by 2018: The second phase of the plan involves the next 200 miles of bikeways, with a continued emphasis towards on-street facilities that link throughout the City. In the long term, if the resources and support are available, the completed system will reach a total of more than 500 miles.

City-wide Share the Road Campaign: The education, encouragement and enforcement elements of the plan are as important as the engineering elements. The Plan calls for a major campaign that provides bicyclists, motorists and other roadway users with the information they need to improve traffic safety on the City's streets. This campaign will complement other programs including Safe Routes to Schools, Commit to be Fit, and employer-based commuter choice initiatives.

100 Bike Friendly Intersections: Safety at intersections is a critical issue for improving mobility as Columbus becomes a Bicycle Friendly Community. Each year, ten intersections will be improved with enhanced signage, pavement markings, bicyclist actuated signals and other features.

1000 New Bike Racks: Just like driving a car, having a secure place to park is essential for travel by bicycle. A new Bicycle Parking Ordinance has been proposed by the City of Columbus Bikeway Advisory Committee. New bike parking can be installed as a typical element of streetscape design, and worksites, public buildings and schools throughout the City.

The Columbus Bicentennial Bikeways Plan guides the future development of bicycle facilities, education, enforcement, and encouragement programs for the City of Columbus over the next ten years. This Plan was developed with public input from the community, but continued outreach and civic participation is encouraged through neighborhoods, area commissions, districts and organizations. The Plan inventories and evaluates the City's current bicycle network, addresses the opportunities and constraints for improving bicycling in Columbus and recommends policy changes to enhance bicycling. The Plan also presents design guidelines for constructing high quality facilities, including shared use paths, bike lanes, signed shared roadways, bicycle parking and innovative treatments such as bicycle boulevards and shared lane markings. The plan prioritizes bicycle facilities and establishes a funding and implementation plan for the next 10 years.

Funding for implementation of the Bicentennial Bikeways Plan will come from a range of sources, including federal and state transportation funds, parks and recreation funds private sector partnerships, and a proposed Bicentennial Bond package that is similar to the bonds that were issued for the City's sidewalk program. The phasing of the plan allows for implementation as resources become available. The key funding elements are described as follows:

Bicentennial Bikeways Bonds ("B3" Bonds): The City will include the Bicentennial Bikeways in the proposed 2008 bond package that will provide funding for key initiatives related to the City's celebration in 2012.

Federal transportation 'Green Tea' demonstration project funding: The reauthorization of the federal SAFETEA transportation legislation will provide a significant opportunity for implementing the Bicentennial Bikeways plan. The City will work with Ohio's Congressional delegation and other partners to secure this funding.

Private sector 'adopt a bikeway' endowment campaign: Key private sector and philanthropic partners will be engaged in a fundraising effort to adopt each mile of the bikeways system. This program will enable community partnerships to sustain the trail system into the future.

Funding from other state and other local sources: There are a range of public, private and non-profit sources that can supplement the primary funding, including land conservation, public transit, utilities, environmental mitigation, health and physical activity, education and other sources.

Quality of Life: Bikeways are an important legacy for the future of Columbus.

Bicyclists and pedestrians in downtown Columbus.

Parks & Recreation Funding: The Recreation and Parks Department and Metro Parks are planning to spend approximately $2,500,000 in 2008 for land acquisition, design and construction associated with shared-use trails in Central Ohio. Additional resources will also be spent for operations, programming and management from recreation funding sources.

In order to successfully implement the plan, partnerships between citizens, public agencies, the private sector and non-profit organizations are essential. The plan recommends that the City agencies establish an Interagency Working Group to coordinate the broad range of engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation elements of the plan. A full time Bikeways coordinator will support this effort. The existing City Bikeway Advisory Committee will continue to be a voice for citizens to advise the City Council. It is also recommended that a new entity be created to engage community leadership in long-term support and fundraising for the Bicentennial Bikeways Plan.

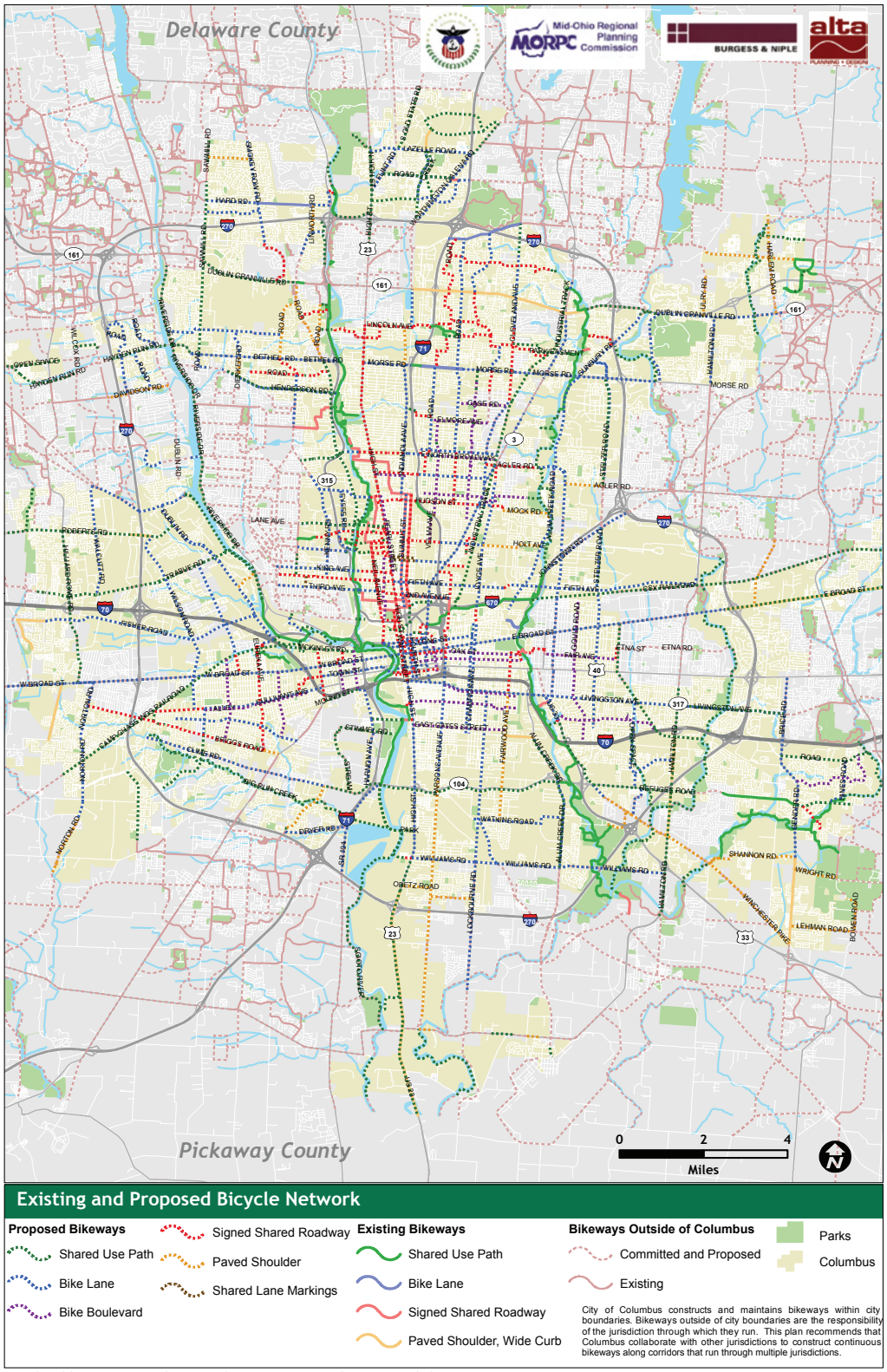
This Bicentennial Bikeways Plan will guide the development of a world-class on-street and off-street bicycle transportation system for the enjoyment and use of Columbus's residents and visitors. With the current popularity of the City's existing bikeways, an increased interest in leading healthy lifestyles, growing concern for the environment, and the need for sustainable economic development, these actions will move Columbus forward into its third century. With support from Columbus community members, the City of Columbus has the potential to implement the new bicycle master plan. The City can shift one out of every ten trips made by car to bicycling, walking, and alternative transportation.

Bicyclists contributing to the local economy.

Cycling along the downtown Columbus waterfront in North Bank Park.

Bicycling as part of a multi-modal trip in Columbus.

Public involvement is an important part of implementing the Bikeways Plan.



Data: City of Columbus, Franklin County, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, U.S. Census. Map created by Alta Planning + Design. January 2007.

The Bicentennial Bikeways Plan proposes more than 500 new miles of bikeways for Columbus.