

Chapter 2 – Transportation Plan Progress Report

Why Update the Comprehensive Transportation Plan?

The 2007 CTP Update incorporates “lessons learned” from recent implementation of projects in Cary and focuses attention on proactive strategies for the future. The CTP Update identifies strategies to maintain the mobility and accessibility of people and goods while enhancing the quality of life for its citizens.

The original CTP was adopted in 2001. Cary's population increased 22.6% between 2000 and 2006, from 94,536 to 115,854, averaging a rate of 3.4% annually. By comparison, Raleigh and the Triangle grew at rates of 4.2% and 5.4%, respectively, during similar time periods. Cary is growing in land area too, by more than 20% to 50.9 square miles from 2000 to 2006.

The success of the CTP Update will depend, in part, on implementation. Simply put, this plan must be practical. With this in mind, the 2007 CTP Update includes discussions on strategies and sources of funding for implementation.

Achievements

Much of the 2001 CTP has been implemented as highlighted below.

Pedestrian Element

In addition to committing \$1 million annually to its sidewalk program, new and rebuilt thoroughfares have sidewalks on both sides of the street. Sidewalks complement the Town's greenway system, which has steadily expanded since 2001 with additions to Black Creek, Panther Creek, and White Oak Greenways. The April 2003 approval of \$30 million in recreation bonds provided the Town with funding for up to 20 miles of greenways as well as a pedestrian bridge over US Highway 1/64.

Bicycle Element

Since 2001, 46 miles of signed bike routes, 15 miles of striped bicycle lanes, and more than 300 bicycle route signs have been installed in Cary. As the Town continues to widen thoroughfares, many bicyclists enjoy using wide outside lanes on these facilities.

In 2003, the League of American Bicyclists named Cary a bronze level Bicycle-Friendly Community in recognition of the Town's efforts to provide a safe, efficient environment for bicyclists and to encourage bicycling as a means of transportation and recreation.

In April 2006, the Town adopted revisions to the Land Development Ordinance that require a minimum number of racks for bicycle parking based on land use type and development units.

Transit Element

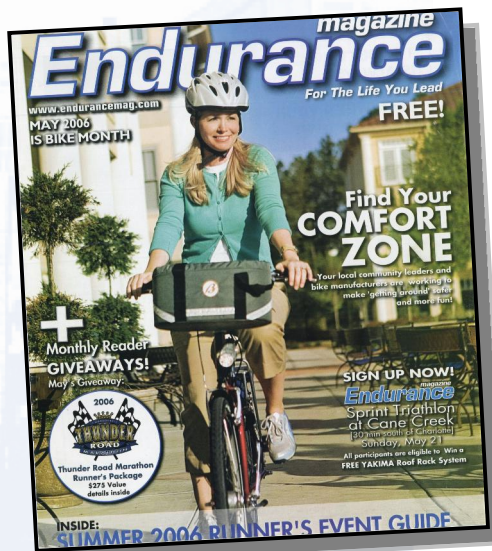
With the launching of C-Tran in August 2001, Cary improved its multimodal transportation system with a new bus service that provides access and mobility. C-Tran now offers service to the general public along three fixed routes, while paratransit services connect seniors and persons with disabilities to jobs and destinations in Cary and throughout the Triangle.

Thoroughfare Element

Widening several major corridors, including Davis Drive, NC 55, and US Highway 1/64, improved mobility for Cary residents, commuters, and visitors. Regional benefits have been derived as well thanks to the proximity of Research Triangle Park. Major projects on the horizon include road projects in Northwest Cary, including extensions to Yates Store Road, Morrisville Parkway, and McCrimmon Parkways, as well as numerous collector streets.

The Town turned to technology to maximize the usefulness of the existing transportation network. An Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS) completed in 2006 equips Cary with a monitoring system and the flexibility to adjust signal timing to reflect actual traffic conditions. By reducing travel times and limiting delays at signalized intersections, the technology helps reduce pollution from vehicle emissions.

The traffic synchronization project and ATMS program provide motorists with information to get them where they need to go. Before leaving home or work, citizens can tune into images from closed circuit TV cameras installed at major intersections to help choose uncongested routes. For those already on the road, dynamic message boards warn of accidents and congested areas. In this way, the ATMS, combined with the Redlight Camera program, improves travel times throughout the Town, increases safety, and optimizes time spent by police and emergency response teams.



Cary was highlighted as a cycling community in the May 2006 Bike Month edition of "Endurance" magazine

“Thanks to [Cary’s] long-term commitment to better bicycling, people in Cary benefit every day from reduced traffic, better air quality, and improved public health. These benefits translate to increased quality of life, higher property values, and heightened community spirit.”

**Elissa Margolin, Executive Director
of the League of American Bicyclists**

Completing the Streets

Cary has long been a state leader in coordinating transportation with land use. The Town’s requirement that developers demonstrate compatibility with regulations—such as the adequate public facilities and connectivity ordinances—exemplifies the local commitment. Since the 2001 plan, the Town has modified ordinances for transportation development fees and adequate public facilities for roads.

Through its activity center plans and small area plans, the Town continues to incorporate all transportation modes into a design that complements adjacent land development. Cary recently appropriated more than \$3.7 million to jumpstart the renovation of downtown streets and sidewalks as part of a downtown streetscape master plan.

Cary built gateway features for those entering the Town at major gateway points. Travelers exiting onto Walnut Street from southbound US 1/64 are now greeted with a new interchange featuring brick walls, improved landscaping, and directional signs. This new gateway feature is one example of how transportation facilities can be designed to contribute to the Town’s visual appeal.

Coordination and Implementation

The widening of NC 55 is one example of how proactive planning and coordination with neighboring jurisdictions can improve the connection between Cary and the larger region. The Town partnered with NCDOT to accelerate the construction of this project by using innovative delivery systems and financing methods. Municipalities across the state now can advance NCDOT funds needed to accelerate important transportation projects. More recently, Cary agreed to use its funds to aid NCDOT in widening Davis Drive in the Town of Morrisville to jumpstart that project. As such, Cary residents working in RTP enjoy a quicker and safer commute.

Guiding Principles

Several themes were emphasized in the 2001 Cary CTP based on public input and the direction of Town staff and officials. The 2001 themes are stated below:

Balance and Travel Choice: spread investments to all modes of travel.

Resolution of Existing Deficiencies: roadway bottlenecks, disconnected sidewalks, limited transit service, and unmarked bikeways are traffic issues commonly cited by citizens.

Business as Usual Will Not Work: future traffic forecasts indicate that the planned improvements will not sustain acceptable levels of service in the face of the growth assumed in the Town's Land Use Plan.

Efficiency: find ways to interconnect modes of travel, facilities, and services so that Cary can maximize the efficiency of each network so they may operate as one seamless transportation system.

Innovation: innovative roadway configurations should be considered where they will preserve the character of the community.

These themes hold true today with the addition of two complimentary themes on which the CTP Update focuses:

Increased multimodal opportunities: The Town is committed not only to providing travel choices, but also to increasing the share of residents choosing alternative modes through encouragement and education programs and through safe, reliable service.

Quality of service: The evaluation of transportation services will no longer be limited to quantitative measures that look only at motor vehicle throughput, such as volume-to-capacity ratios and intersection levels of service. Quantitative assessment will be one type among a variety of measures of overall service quality. Total system performance will be determined by measuring the quality of service for all modes of travel accommodated by the street network, including sidewalks and bicycle facilities.