

Pathways Master Plan

THE TOWN OF JACKSON & TETON COUNTY, WYOMING



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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Master Plan Overview

Imagine using “human power” to move through the Jackson Hole landscape on a smooth surface, lined by wildflowers and native plantings, through conservation areas and neighborhoods, connecting schools, resorts, work and recreation, with custom designed benches, rest areas, and works of art designed to connect the heritage and culture of Jackson Hole...Imagine being able to redefine the connection between the human and natural environments, and to build a “green infrastructure” that reduces fossil fuel consumption, enables freedom of mobility, encourages more physical activity, allows children to walk or bike to school, reduces traffic congestion, and makes it possible to create economic growth at the same time...This is the Jackson Hole Community Pathways System.

“This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man does not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.”

- Chief Seattle, of the Dwamish People, (1855) in a letter to U.S. President Franklin Pierce

Much of the core for this system is already on the ground or in development, and the missing links and future Complete Street and pathway corridors prioritized for the next five years are identified in this Master Plan. Teton County and the Town of Jackson have constructed more than 25 miles of paved shared-use paths in the past decade, and these facilities are being connected to improved sidewalks, on-street bikeways, and the region’s START transit system. The terms “Pathways”¹ and “Complete Streets”² have become part of the community’s identity, representing a wide range of interests, user groups, and facility types that are being brought together to create an integrated multi-modal system for transportation and recreation.

The Jackson Hole Pathways System has the potential to be a world-class model for sustainable development. There is significant community support for Complete Streets and pathways, and the Town and County Comprehensive Plan includes a goal for “...the enhancement of the pedestrian and bicycle environment to achieve modal shares of 13 percent and 10 percent respectively, as well as to reduce pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle accidents by 10 percent.” It will still take a substantial and continued effort to achieve a fully unified, connected system that can realize this goal. The Pathways Master Plan provides the “trail map” to get there.

The Town Councilors and County Commissioners have charged a group of appointed citizens to guide this process. The Pathways Task Force is comprised of community leaders committed to achieving the vision of: **“Improving and enhancing non-motorized opportunities for transportation and recreation...”**

Bicycling, walking, hiking, Nordic skiing, and equestrian travel are all popular activities in Jackson Hole both for recreation and transportation. As the system develops, many of the pathways, bikeways and sidewalks are achieving the over-arching goal of “connecting people and places” so that more utilitarian travel and trips combined with links to the Southern Teton Area Rapid Transit (START) services contribute to a more

¹ In this document, the term “Pathways” generally refers to separated shared-use paths, while “Pathways System” refers to the entire collection of multi-modal facilities including sidewalks, on-street bikeways, separated shared-use paths, transit connections, improved roadways, trails, equestrian paths, and groomed Nordic trails.

² “Complete Streets” is a policy model that calls for design, construction, and maintenance of safe facilities for all modes of transportation. See Section 3.8 Proposed Policy Recommendations for a detailed description.

sustainable community. By developing an integrated network of sidewalks, bike lanes, shared-use paths, transit connections, and enhanced roadways, Jackson Hole will create a balanced approach that allows people the freedom to choose the mode of travel that is appropriate to their needs.

The Pathways System has more than 27 miles of paved shared-use paths and 20 miles of sidewalks in place today. The complete system will be more than 75-80 miles long, and will connect to a growing regional network. Pathways can link to trails in the Bridger-Teton National Forest and other public lands. The system will also connect to the network of shared-use paths in Grand Teton National Park as outlined in the Park's Transportation Plan - Final EIS approved in 2007. The capital construction of the next generation of pathways will be accomplished through publicly funded capital projects (using state, federal and local funding), integrating Complete Streets and pathways into new development projects and highway projects, and through partnerships with the non-profit and private sectors. At the same time, the physical infrastructure needs to be complemented by a re-organized administrative system, with clearly structured operations, programming, and maintenance functions.

Benefits and Challenges

As part of the planning process, public input, focus groups, and community workshops were held to articulate some of the issues regarding the development of the Pathways program in Jackson Hole. These are summarized as benefits and challenges in the following section:

Benefits: Why are Pathways important to Jackson Hole?

Bicycling and walking are important to Jackson Hole residents, visitors, and businesses for a variety of reasons:

Bicycling and walking are a necessary part of the transportation system in Teton County.

Pedestrians and bicyclists are an integral element of a balanced transportation system. Practically every trip includes a pedestrian element, and the valley's flat topography and spectacular scenery is attractive for bicycling. Sidewalks, crossings, bike lanes, paved shoulders, and shared-use paths can provide a growing share of the community's mobility needs.

Safety is a significant issue.

Already, significant numbers of people are walking and bicycling in locations that are not safe. Improving intersections, completing sidewalks, creating on-street bikeways, and providing safe crossings will reduce the potential for bicycle and pedestrian fatalities and injuries from crashes with motor vehicles.

Pathways can play a vital role in improving the health of residents and visitors to Jackson Hole.

Our nation is facing a national obesity epidemic, and increased physical activity is part of the solution. People are more likely to be physically active if they can walk or bike as part of their daily routine. The Pathways System can create opportunities for people to replace driving trips with active transportation. This is especially important for children, who will be able to walk and bike to school more often as a result of the Pathways program.

The Pathways System will contribute to a sustainable environment for all residents of Jackson Hole, including both human and wildlife populations.

The natural resources of Jackson Hole are a national treasure. Every effort must be made to ensure that the Pathways program is a model for creating a more positive way to connect people and nature. The Master Plan provides innovative tools for balancing conservation, environmental, and human concerns.

Developing shared-use paths, single track trails, bikeways, enhanced roadways, equestrian trails, and more walkable communities makes good economic sense for Jackson Hole.

Jackson Hole's economy is supported by its quality of life. As more people are able to choose where they live, work, and play, it is important to maintain Jackson Hole's leadership as an outdoor recreation oriented destination community. The Pathways System supports outdoors recreation businesses, provides a substantial amenity for visitors and residents, and can create additional real estate value. At the same time, walking and bicycling can provide an affordable transportation alternative for residents and employees who are challenged to afford the region's high cost of living.

Bicycling and walking can improve the overall quality-of-life of Jackson Hole residents.

Providing a livable, walkable and bikeable community is a necessary part of attracting and retaining businesses and residents. Bicycling and walking are integral to the image of Jackson Hole as a safe and welcoming community. The ability to safely travel by biking and walking is a cornerstone of the "Town as Heart" concept cited in the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan.

Challenges: What are some of the issues that must be overcome to create the Pathways System?

Growth: Jackson Hole's dramatic population growth in recent years has included new development in areas not served by the existing network of non-motorized transportation and recreation.

Priorities and Funding: With the region's growth, other projects and programs have to compete for resources, and it has taken time to build the level of support that now exists for pathways and other multi-modal transportation facilities.

Connectivity: Expansion of the bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian network has not achieved a level of connectivity so that bicycling or walking is a safe or convenient option.

System Management: Current agencies responsible for maintaining and operating Jackson Hole's infrastructure have experienced the demands of the growing system of sidewalks, bikeways, and shared-use paths.

Congestion: Growth of the road network has not kept pace with development or visitor pressures, creating traffic congestion and air pollution. At some point, the community (and its partners in State and Federal agencies) must recognize that road widening is only one way to solve this problem, and that Complete Streets and pathways are a part of the solution.

Natural Resources: Development in Jackson Hole adversely impacts the region’s natural resources. The Pathways System must minimize potential impacts and maximize benefits through appropriate design and management, with particular attention given to wildlife habitat and important migration corridors.

Equity: The region’s growth has had an impact on residents who are unable to drive or cannot afford to own and operate an automobile, especially in light of the region’s high real estate values.

Program Focus: The historical focus of the Pathways program was primarily on the shared-use path network. The Pathways program’s initial phases were oriented to create the valley’s first paved shared-use paths. As the program continues to evolve, new partnerships are necessary to include a broader definition of “Pathways” that includes a wide range of projects, programs, and policies that support non-motorized transportation and recreation.

In response to these benefits and challenges, this Plan identifies a balanced approach to developing the plans, programs, and policies that support non-motorized travel. There are many locations that are in need of improvements such as new sidewalks, bike lanes, shared-use paths, and intersection crossing improvements. The Plan calls for the development of more and better connectivity of all non-motorized facilities in the Town of Jackson, Teton County, and other unincorporated towns, resorts, and population centers throughout the valley. The plan also identifies a variety of other programs that support and encourage more bicycling and walking. For example, more people will bicycle and walk for short trips if mixed-use development becomes more common, secure bike parking is provided at destinations, and bike safety and promotion programs are developed. As new bike lanes and sidewalks are built throughout the valley, school-based pedestrian safety, bicycle safety, and traffic law enforcement programs will also be needed to teach users how to share the road safely. Promotional programs will encourage more people to choose to travel without their automobiles. This plan provides the framework for making the community’s goals into reality.

Master Plan Components

The original intent of the Master Plan was to present a vision for the fully developed system implemented during the next 25 years. The Pathways Master Plan Consultant Team, led by Alta Planning + Design, and assisted by sub-consultant team members from The Greenway Team and Jorgensen Associates, has researched the Pathways program, and conducted over a dozen workshops between 2005 and 2007 to develop this Plan. During this time, the team has reviewed numerous documents, including the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan, the 1992 and 2001 versions of the Pathways Conceptual Plans, and conducted extensive site visits and interviews to understand the present operating practices, policies, procedures, and character of the existing Pathways System. In the course of the public approval process for the 2007 Pathways Master Plan, the Jackson Town Council and Teton County Board of Commissioners voted to reduce the scope of the Plan’s vision from a 25-year completed system vision to a 5-year system priority vision.

Jackson Hole has the potential to create a world-class system of Complete Streets, pathways and trails, rivaled by few other communities, and to be a model for sustainable transportation and development. The Comprehensive Plan calls for the development of this system as a key component of the valley’s transportation system, and other Chapters refer to the recreational, cultural, and community character benefits upon completion.

The Pathways Master Plan is subdivided into three sections: the Policy Plan; Strategic Plan; and Implementation Plan. These sections are specific to accomplishing the vision of the Pathways Task Force,

and mission of the Pathways program, for effectively and efficiently completing and managing the Pathways System as it continues to grow toward completion. It is subdivided as below:

Policy Plan: Defines the existing conditions, programs and policies that support the Jackson Hole Pathways System, including:

- Project Overview, Purpose and Need
- Existing Pathways System
- Administration and Policy
- Operations and Programming
- System Maintenance
- Design Guidelines and Construction Specifications

Strategic Plan: Articulates when and where we are going, and implementation priorities for achieving the vision, including:

- Major Maintenance Priorities
- New Project Priorities

Implementation Plan: Describes the process of benchmarking the program's development, and recommends future actions, including:

- Performance Measures
- Recommendations
- Next Steps

Included in Section 8. New Project Priorities is the Capital Project 5-Year Priority List developed by the Pathways Task Force and the Pathways program. The projects listed below will guide the planning and construction efforts of the program for the immediate future.

Capital Project 5-Year Priorities

1. Complete Streets
2. WY22 Pathway
3. South Park Loop Pathway
4. High School Road
5. Karns Meadow Pathway
6. North Jackson
7. Teton Science School Connector
8. North 89 Pathway
9. WY22 Wilson School Connector
10. South 89 Pathway

Creating and managing the Pathways System is a challenging task. However, the community has repeatedly expressed its support for developing the Pathways program in a timely and efficient manner. The

responsibility for accomplishing these tasks rests with the Jackson Hole Community Pathways program, in partnership with local agencies (especially the Town of Jackson Department of Public Works, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the County Engineering Department, along with Friends of Pathways and numerous non-profit, regional, state, and federal partners). This Master Plan document will provide the guidance for continued Pathways program system development and management. In response to the significant community support of the Jackson Hole Community Pathways program, the consultant team has developed the Key Recommendations listed below, which identify tools for the successful implementation of a sustainable non-motorized transportation and recreation system for the residents and visitors of Jackson and Teton County.

Key Recommendations for Implementing this Plan

1. Integrate the Pathways program throughout the transportation planning and land development review processes to ensure that non-motorized transportation system connectivity is accomplished as a routine element of capital and maintenance projects.
2. Develop a sustainable, long-term funding mechanism to ensure successful completion and operation of the Pathways System as a community asset. It is recommended that the Pathways program, in cooperation with non-profit and private sector support, establish a maintenance endowment or other permanent funding source.
3. The JHCP program should ultimately have staff or partner program support specifically responsible for Operations and Programming, so that education, outreach, encouragement, and safety initiatives can be provided as a high-quality community service.
4. In order to systematically maintain the Pathways System, an “Owners Manual” should be created with a codified set of maintenance guidelines and procedures that are formally documented and adopted.
5. A JHCP Design Manual should be developed to guide design and construction of shared-use paths and amenities, including typical sections, material specifications, wildlife guidelines, and design types.
6. Adopt a “Complete Streets and Pathways Policy.” “Complete Streets” is a new national policy model that integrates facilities for bicyclists, pedestrians, and pathways into routine transportation, infrastructure, and public works projects and programs. The current Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan includes a version of this policy type that can be enhanced.
7. The Pathways program should implement a safety review process that includes systematic risk management assessment, inter-agency design review for all proposed improvements, user education, and accident and crime reporting.
8. Develop supplemental pedestrian and sidewalk plans for the Town of Jackson and primary Teton County development nodes, including the Aspens, Teton Village, Hoback Junction, and Wilson, and other developed nodes as needed.
9. Ensure that the Pathways program provides a balanced approach that includes the full range of non-motorized facilities, including shared-use paths, single track trails, on-street bikeways, sidewalks, safe crossings, bicycle parking and transit connections.

10. The Jackson Hole Community Pathways program administration should be reorganized to meet the scale and need of the system as it moves towards completion. This reorganization should include a clearly organized structure for management of capital projects, operations, programming and maintenance, and to recognize the significant roles played by partner agencies and organizations.
11. The JHCP program should develop an Asset Management System using GIS/GPS technologies to locate, map and manage the non-motorized transportation and recreation system that it is implementing.
12. There is a clear need for a balanced, rational approach that recognizes the benefits of building pathways that appropriately and sensitively connect people and the environment. Procedures to incorporate wildlife professionals and advocates as active partners in the development of the Pathways System should be developed to help ensure that the preservation of natural resources is addressed as a routine element of pathways planning, construction, and management.
13. The Pathways program will include landowners as early as possible in the planning process for pathways that may affect their property. The primary approach to gaining public access privileges will continue to be through cooperation with landowners to grant voluntary easements. Users of the Pathways System will be encouraged to respect private property and the rights of landowners.

With the adopted Pathways Master Plan, Jackson Hole can ensure that bicycle and pedestrian accommodations will be more fully integrated into local, state, and regional transportation improvements. State and federal transportation policy with regard to bicycle and pedestrian accommodations continues to evolve and improve, creating new priorities and opportunities for funding. A clear articulation of local bicycle and pedestrian needs is vital to ensure that our transportation investments will improve and expand opportunities for bicycling, walking, and other forms of non-motorized travel in Jackson and Teton County.

The past decade has seen the creation of a significant Pathways movement in Jackson Hole. This effort has not been without its growing pains, but that is part of the creation of any new initiative. Jackson Hole has positioned itself to be a premier community for non-motorized transportation and recreation. With continued support from throughout the community, with the resources available from the public and non-profit sectors, and with the vision established by this Pathways Master Plan, Jackson Hole is well on its way to an exciting future.



Pathways are a key to enhancing the quality of life in Jackson Hole.

