

Mebane City Beat: Town's bicycle and pedestrian plan

BY KELLY HUNTER

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS OF ORANGE

MEBANE — Mebane residents, it's an exciting time for the growth and transformation of our beloved city's infrastructure. As an integral part of steering our community towards a more connected and health-conscious future, the update on our Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan comes with a promise of new strides in our journey to becoming a more pedestrian-friendly city.

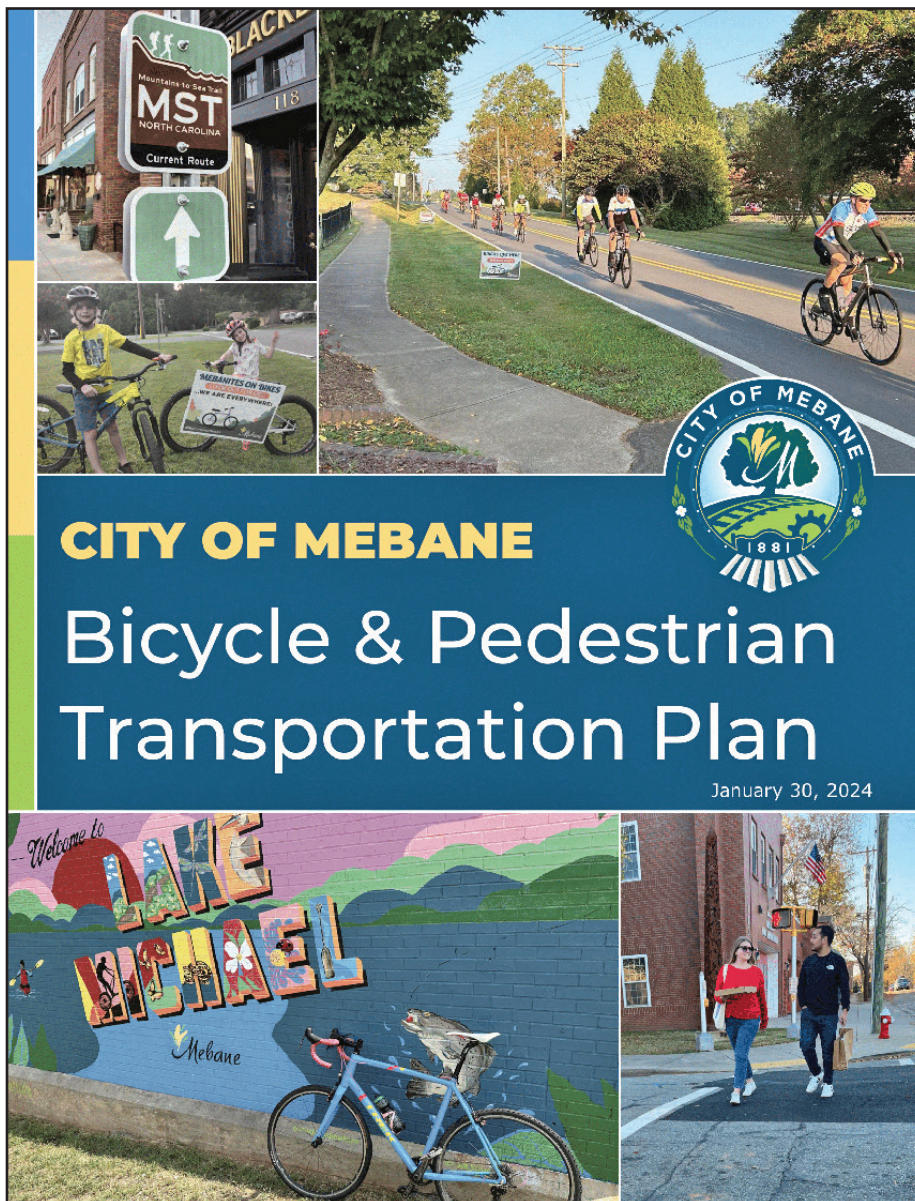
The first ever Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan was adopted in 2015 and listed roughly 40 projects that have either been constructed, are approved for construction or are under construction. The Mebane City Council has supported various projects through the city's annual budget process, with the most notable one being the recent awarding of contracts for the Lake Michael Connector and the Holt Street Greenway.

Additionally, many new developments in Mebane include the construction of projects recommended in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan. These developments include the investment in sidewalks, multi-use paths, and on-road bicycle facilities that aid in contributing to the city's extensive network of sidewalks and emerging multi-use path connectivity.

Perhaps one of the most significant accomplishments of the original Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan was the establishment of the Mebane Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC). The BPAC was created by the Mebane City Council in September 2017. Their role is to advise city staff and the city council on bicycle and pedestrian issues while engaging with and educating the public on bicycle and pedestrian opportunities and safety.

Included in the original plan were transportation methods for Mebane residents to be able to get around. Served by regional transit providers such as GoTriangle and Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART), Mebane citizens can utilize these ride services to connect to Durham, Chapel Hill, and Greensboro.

The city has also historically maintained a network of sidewalks that are only increasing in mileage as Mebane continues to grow. Bicycle usage has increased since the pandemic and therefore, there are shared-lane markings and bicycle signage on a few downtown streets to encourage vehicles to share the road



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with bicyclists.

A multi-use path, which facilitates the travel of pedestrians and bicyclists, is emerging in the northern part of Mebane to connect neighborhoods to Lake Michael Park. Additionally, multi-use path networks have been proposed in the central part of Mebane, Old Hillsborough, and the southern part of Mebane, Bowman Roads.

Since our initial plan in 2015 laid the groundwork for advancements in our transit systems, Mebane has not only grown in population but also blossomed in its reach. It's this growth that has spurred our efforts to revise our previous plan, ensuring that it encapsulates both newly-developed areas and hopes to provide seamless transitions between home, leisure, and work for all residents. Updates to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan will continue to allow the city to realize bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure through the review of development proposals. Rachel Gaffney, a City Planner and the assigned staff person to the Mebane Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) explains: "One of the biggest benefits of adopting an updated Bicycle and Pedestrian

Transportation Plan is that it helps city staff ensure that future developments will support the city's active transportation goals.

For example, if a developer is interested in building in an area that is designated on the plan as needing a multi-use path, intersection improvements, or another type of bicycle or pedestrian facility then the developer may be required to provide or contribute to those improvements as part of the proposed development. This updated plan builds on the developments and accomplishments that have occurred since the last plan was adopted and adds new recommendations that will better serve the city's evolving needs."

What was the process for updating the current plan? Well, back in August of 2022, interviews of more than twenty stakeholders, six focus groups, and a public meeting were held. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan coordinated with the Recreation and Parks Comprehensive Master Plan to boost their public engagement efforts. These long-range planning efforts were collectively branded as: Together, Moving Mebane Forward.

Public participation in the long-

range planning included a survey and online engagement hub with an idea wall and interactive map. From August to December 2022, over 300 individuals participated in the survey and over 1,600 visited the online engagement hub. The BPAC was also involved throughout the process, serving as a focus group during the initial engagement and sharing opportunities for the community to complete the survey. The results of the public engagement guided the development of the plan update with project recommendations and priorities being assessed by staff of various city departments for feasibility.

The BPAC collaborated with city staff in the prioritization process to develop a top-ten list of projects. Members of the BPAC have long recognized the benefits of active transportation in Mebane. Katy Jones, Chair of the Mebane BPAC, stated: "The City of Mebane's enhanced Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, championed by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, is an exciting next step in Mebane's growth. The BPAC's involvement in updating the plan underscores its commitment to fostering sustainability, aligning city planning with community needs, and promoting healthier, more accessible places to live. By prioritizing bicycle and pedestrian programs and policies, Mebane not only enhances safety and connectivity but also cultivates a vibrant, inclusive town that encourages active lifestyles and reduces environmental impact."

Results from the public engagement findings have led to new project recommendations and strategies aimed at improving project implementation, policies, and education. Since the first plan was adopted, Mebane's boundaries have expanded, thus the updated plan recommendation includes a new study area to better capture where development is occurring in Mebane. From there, the city will ensure connections between new and existing developments, parks and recreational facilities, downtown Mebane, and other destinations. The updated Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan identifies more than 80 projects and highlights ten priority projects with information sheets.

To review the updated Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, please visit <https://cityofmebanenc.gov/together/>. "Together, Let's Keep Moving Mebane Forward."

Kelly Hunter is the Public Information Officer with the City of Mebane.

TATREAU

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tive director, Mollie Thomas, stepped away. During that time, Tatreau demonstrated exceptional team leadership qualities.

"Heather stepped up in a big way when she joined us in her Interim role," commented Board Chair, Joshua Collins. "She quickly proved to be a great leader, working well with our staff, board, and volunteers, jumping in to support one of our largest marquee events just weeks after joining our organization. After a long recruiting process and a robust pool of qualified candidates, Heather stood tall as the best fit to lead the next phase of growth for the Hillsborough Arts Council. The board could not be more excited to have her at the helm and for the future of arts in Hillsborough."

Expressing her enthusiasm for her new position, Tatreau remarked, "I am passionate about creating programming that inspires the artist in everyone. What I love about HAC is the community-driven mission to ensure that arts events remain accessible. I am a firm believer that the arts are uniquely positioned to bring people together and create moments of joy and understanding. I look forward to working in collaboration with our community partners to manifest this vision.

"I'm just two exits up in Chapel Hill, but I've been to the Last Friday Art Walks, the Handmade Parade, all of that and this always has been an organization that's really impressed me with the scope of work that they do and the community engagement and the events that they've put on to serve its population. It's a unique experience that Hillsborough has. Sort of that small-town feel but then the real embracing of the artists that actually draws a lot of people to the town just for those events," she added.

While the Hillsborough Arts Council already has steady focus on performing arts, Tatreau said her love of dance will likely come through in her leadership.

"There's already a really big dance presence here, and I'm really excited about continuing those relationships," she said. "I do have folks that I know around the area that I can bring in as well to bolster that even more and bigger."

Tatreau said part of what made the Hillsborough Arts Council so attractive to her is the strength of the programs that are already in place. This, she believes, will enable her to pursue other initiatives, one of which is to return the Poet Laureate program to Hillsborough.

"I know that's been in conversation a lot, and that's one of my priorities is to have some conversations with stakeholders about that to figure out

a way forward with bringing back the program."

Among Tatreau's responsibilities as executive director is to focus on community relationships, building pathways between artists in the community and the organization's programming, and pursuing funding and support opportunities. But what she is most looking forward to is being on

the move and in the middle of things.

"I'm really excited about the hands-on aspect," Tatreau said. "I'm not an executive director that's going to be in a back office somewhere. I don't even have a formal office. I'm on the move all the time, like as a choreographer. I'm a doer. I like to be hands-on and in the thick of things. That's exciting to me."

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