

# POLICY ELEMENT

## CHAPTER 2



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# 2.1 Bicycle Advisory Commission

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The City's Bicycle Advisory Commission was established by the Merced City Council through Ordinance No. 2323, which was introduced on February 2, 2009, and passed and adopted on February 17, 2009. The ordinance describes a three-fold purpose and jurisdiction of the BAC:

## 2.1.1 Improve Conditions for Bicyclists

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- Reviewing and advising the City Council on the design of capital improvement projects, street improvements, and parking facility projects as they relate to bicycling, except for matters pertaining to pedestrian issues.
- Reviewing and advising the City Council on changes and updates to the Bicycle Master Plan, General Plan, Municipal Code and other policy documents which relate to bicycling.
- Initiate requests to City staff from the community on issues of concern (Liaison).

## 2.1.2 Promote Bicycling as a Means of Transportation

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- Promote bicycling as a viable form of transportation.
- Initiate requests to City staff from the community on issues of concern (Liaison).

## 2.1.3 Improve Safety Conditions for Bicyclists

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- Assist in the development and dissemination of bicycle safety awareness and education materials to the community.
- Initiate requests to City staff from the community on issues of concern (Liaison).



## 2.2 Complete Streets Policies

Multimodal transportation networks allow for all modes of travel including walking, bicycling, and transit to be used to reach key destinations in a community and region safely and directly. Jurisdictions can use *complete streets* design to construct networks of safe streets that are accessible to all modes and all users no matter their age or ability. *The California Complete Streets Act* (AB 1358), was passed and gives direction to local governments to address “complete streets” in their general plans. The Act states: “transportation planners must find innovative ways to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and to shift from short trips in the automobile to biking, walking, and use of public transit.”<sup>2</sup>

The City's *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* is a statement of the community's vision of its long-term or ultimate physical form, and is a guiding framework for land use decisions. While there are many *Complete Streets* Implementing Actions in the City's General Plan that apply to bicycle planning, the goal and related policies that guide the development of streets for use by all modes of transportation are presented on the next page.



## Merced Vision 2030 General Plan Goal

A Comprehensive System of “Complete Streets” Addressing all Modes of Transportation

### **COMPLETE-STREETS RELATED**

Policy T-1.1	Design streets consistent with circulation function, affected land uses, and all modes of transportation.
Policy L-3.1	Create land use patterns that will encourage people to walk, bicycle, or use public transit for an increased number of their daily trips.
Policy UD-1.2	Distribute and design urban villages to promote convenient vehicular, pedestrian, and transit access.
Policy UD-1.1	Apply transit-ready development or urban village design principles to new development in the City’s new growth areas.
Policy L-3.3	Promote site designs that encourage walking, cycling, and transit use.

### **TRANSIT-RELATED**

Policy T-2.1	Provide for and maintain a major transit way along M Street and possibly along the Bellevue Road/Merced-Atwater Expressway and Campus Parkway corridors.
Policy T-2.2	Support and enhance the use of public transit.
Policy T-2.3	Support a safe and effective public transit system.

### **BIKE-RELATED**

Policy T-2.4	Encourage the use of bicycles.
Policy T-2.5	Provide convenient bicycle support facilities to encourage bicycle use.
Policy T-2.6	Maintain and expand the community’s existing bicycle circulation system.
Policy OS-3.2	Maintain and expand the City’s bikeway and trail system.

### **PEDESTRIAN-RELATED**

Policy T-2.7	Maintain a pedestrian-friendly environment.
Policy T-2.8	Improve planning for pedestrians.

In summary, the City’s General Plan envisions that all streets should be designed as “Complete Streets” which address all modes of motorized and non-motorized transportation, including vehicles, transit, pedestrians, and bicycles. These goals and policies, together with the goals and policies of the *2013 Bicycle Transportation Plan*, form the foundation upon which to design, build, and construct bicycle facilities in the City of Merced.

## 2.3 BTP Consistency Analysis

The draft BTP was examined to assure consistency with other local plans and programs that provide incentives for bicycle commuting. The Merced County Association of Governments compared the *2013 BTP* with the *2011 Regional Transportation Plan*, while the City of Merced compared the *2013 BTP* with:

- The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*
- The *Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan*
- The *2012 Climate Action Plan*
- The *South Merced Community Plan*

The applicable excerpts of these plans' policies are located in Appendix B of the *2013 BTP*.

### **RELATED CITY POLICIES**

A consistency check between the BTP policies and those of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* and other related City bike-related policies was performed. For each topic area (Education, Encouragement, Engineering, Enforcement, Evaluation, and Equity), a listing of related policies is provided. The policies of the *2013 BTP* add direction and specificity to the broader guiding principles of these other policy documents. In those instances when policy-related language from these other plans add specificity not found in the *2013 BTP* Policies, those were added to the list of policies in Section 2.5, and are denoted in parenthesis by such policy and origin, for example, "CAP EM 1.3.9" from the City's *2012 Climate Action Plan*.

### **COMPLETE STREETS**

Many of the bike-related policies of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* support the concept of "Complete Streets." These policies are referenced under the "Equity" category, in recognition of bicycles as a transportation mode.

### **CODE AMENDMENTS**

*Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* policies that mention the possibility of code amendments related to bike-related facilities are cited in the "Equity" Section.

# 2.4 BTP Vision, Goals, and Policies

## 2.4.1 Vision

The *2013 BTP* aims to inspire, educate, guide, and create a safe means of transportation throughout the community for all types of users.

The plan's goals and polices are framed around the six "E's" of bike planning, and include:

- Education
- Engineering
- Evaluation
- Encouragement
- Enforcement
- Equity

The sixth "E," Equity, is added to the list in recognition that the City considers bicycles a viable transportation mode in the community for many citizens.

The goals and policies of the *2013 BTP* are in addition to and support the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation actions of other plans, such as the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, the *2012 Climate Action Plan*, and the *2011 Regional Transportation Plan*.

Policies from the *2008 BTP* were carried forward into the *2013 BTP*, and were adjusted based in part on the feedback from the *Fall 2011 Bicycle Friendly Community* assessment and public comments received in the preparation of the *2013 BTP*.

## 2.4.2 Education

Education, an integral part of a successful bike plan, will promote bicycling as a viable and attractive transportation mode, and may also lead to fewer bike-related collisions. All citizens engaged in riding bicycles could benefit from learning bicycle-related laws and safe-riding techniques. Motorists should also be reminded to be aware of and be respectful to bicyclists sharing the roadways or crossing intersections and driveways.

**GOAL: Educate the public, specifically cyclists and motorists, of their responsibility to operate their vehicles in accordance with traffic laws. Education should encompass safety, bicycle handling skills, and traffic skills.**

### *Policies:*

- Promote bicycle safety programs in employment centers and local schools, and to adopt a more proactive approach to bicycle safety education, including holding yearly safety classes at local schools at the beginning of the school year.
- Seek to educate drivers and bicyclists by publicizing and promoting safe bicycle commuting.
- Consider the dedication of a new page on the City's website to bicycle transportation, recreation, and education; include links to the *2013 BTP*, bicycle laws, safety tips and other such helpful resources.
- Consider the use of the City's "Your City Connection" newsletter as a means of distributing bike safety information to the general public.





## 2.4.3 Encouragement

Encouragement includes **partnering** with local bicycling champions to support bicycling education and fun activities. The City of Merced, in a **leadership** example role, is doing its part as a major employer by implementing “eTrip” measures to encourage its employees to use alternative modes of transportation to get to/from work. **Coordinating** bicycle planning and implementation with the local interest entities, (i.e. employers, school districts, Merced College, UC Merced, commercial and industrial businesses), will build the sense of benefit through ownership. Educating the public of the financial, health, and environmental **benefits** of bicycling will provide further encouragement for this mode choice.

**GOAL:** Promote the financial, health, and environmental benefits of bicycle commuting.

### **Policies:**

- Encourage and assist employers to implement bike-to-work incentive programs at the workplace.
- Continue to support cycling sports, family fun rides, and other cycling events in the City as a means to encourage bicycling.
- Encourage the use of bike transportation by providing students and school faculty with safe and direct bicycle facilities.
- List bike repair facilities on an updated bikeway map.
- Continue with programs that educate the general public on the health benefits of bicycling.
- Encourage large employers to promote carpooling and other **transportation alternatives** within their work force (GP T-1.6c)
- Seek to create an incentive-based program as a means to encourage employers to provide destination amenities required by bicyclists, including: safe, secure, covered bicycle parking; and showers and lockers at workplaces (CAP EM 1.3.7) – also see GP L-2.7 and T-2.5.

**Related City Policies:** (T-1.6, L-2.7,L-3.1, T-1.2, T-1.8, T-2.1, T-2.4, T-2.5, T-2.6, T-2.9, P-7.1, OS-3.4, SD-1.4, SD-1.5, SD-4.2 and EM 1.3.7.)

## 2.4.4 Engineering

Continuing to improve the bikeway system involves the coordination of the City's Planning and Engineering Departments with the public. This coordination addresses the major consideration to ***provide safe, convenient, and complete bikeway system access from residences to destinations***. For the existing bikeway system, measures could be implemented to optimize its attractiveness and usefulness.

**GOAL: Strive to provide safe and convenient bikeway access and support facilities to all destinations within the City and other regional destinations, including the UC Merced campus.**

### ***Policies:***

- Strive to provide bikeways that link residential areas with employment centers, downtown, schools, shopping centers, parks, and other major target areas.
- The bikeway system should fit the needs of commuters, while serving recreational and exercise purposes.
- Site bicycle support facilities such as bike racks, lockers, water fountains, etc., along bikeways and near destination areas, to the extent possible.
- Plan bicycle facilities in coordination with the development of UC Merced.
- Continue to integrate bicycling with the transit system.
- Promote the development of a “Bicycle Buddy” website.
- Design bikeways that integrate with the City’s Parks and Open Space Master Plan.
- To support those who choose to use bicycles as their sole means of transportation, try to design facilities that support riding at night.
- In order to better meet the needs of the anticipated increasing ridership and to install the best designs possible, continue to provide training in bikeway design to City staff involved in land use and infrastructure development.
- Use cities designated by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) as Platinum or Gold cities as models to follow for the best bikeway designs and encourage staff to seek advice from other bikeway planning professionals through the use of professional organizations to use as resources.
- In addition to off-street Class I Bikeways and Class II Bike Lanes, explore designs and appropriate sites in Merced for bicycle use spaces to be located within street rights-of-way having limited exposure to vehicular traffic, such as sharrows, shared streets, and bike boulevards (CAP, EM1.3.8).

**Related City Policies:** UE-1.3, L-1.9, L-2.8, L-2.10, L-3.1, L-3.3, L-3.5, T-1.1, T-1.5, T-2.5, T-2.6, T-3.5, P-5.2, UD-1.1, OS-3.1, OS-3.2, EM 1.3.8, EM 1.3.5, EM 1.3.4, EM 1.3.2, and EM1.3.1.

## 2.4.5 Enforcement

Enforcement means more than just police officers handing out tickets for violations. Enforcement is also about **implementing proactive measures** to improve the safety of bicyclists. Increasing the public's awareness of bicyclists through education will enhance ridership safety; as such, many of the Education-related policies supplement and support the "Enforcement" policies listed below.

**GOAL: Reduce the incidents of bicycle-related collisions with enforcement that emphasizes education, compliance, and proactive measures.**

***Policies:***

- Continue to design bikeways that minimize conflicts between bicyclists, vehicles, and pedestrians to the extent practical.
- Design bikeways that conform to the Caltrans Design Manual standards for bikeway classifications.
- Consider a system whereby bicyclists can easily report bikeway maintenance issues (i.e. sweeping, overgrown vegetation, lack of support facilities, vandalism, etc).
- Consider the provision of police patrol on bike paths.
- Consider pros and cons of well-lit bicycle facilities when updating the City's Design Standards.
- Through site plan review and consideration of use on bike lockers, seek to minimize the occurrence of bicycle thefts in the community.
- Promote increased traffic safety with special attention to intersection operations and associated design, and hazards which could cause personal injury (GP, T-1.4c).
- Situations where **bike paths** are located along the back sides of homes with limited visibility should be avoided as much as possible. Open fencing along **bike paths** should be considered, especially adjacent to multi-family developments (GP, OS-3.2h).

**Related City Policies:** T-1.4, T-1.7, T-1.7, UD-1.2 and OS-3.2.

## 2.4.6 Evaluation

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To determine the benefits and successes associated with implementing the measures addressed in the *2013 BTP*, routine assessments will need to be conducted. As funding is made available, coordination between various City Departments (Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, Police, and Public Works), will ensure the implementation of the most beneficial, high priority improvements.

**GOAL: Develop means to finance and implement the *2013 BTP*, and to consistently and accurately *measure bicycle use* for transportation purposes. Monitor and record bikeway facility and program successes.**

***Policies:***

- Encourage surveys at schools and major employers to measure bicycle ridership from year to year.
- Seek to measure bicycle traffic at various areas along the bikeway system.
- Monitor the progress of the *2013 BTP*, and update as required.
- Utilize the *2013 BTP* to guide bike-related decisions and recommendations.
- Seek funding from various sources to implement the *2013 BTP*.
- Include the Bicycle Advisory Commission in the BTP monitoring and updating process.
- Strive to maintain and/or improve standing/ranking on the League of American Bicyclist's list of "Bike Friendly Communities."
- Update the BTP to reflect the Climate Action Plan, and to coordinate with Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School policies (CAP EM 1.3.6)

**Related City Policies:** T-1.2, T-2.6, T-2.9, SD-1.2 and EM 1.3.6.



## 2.4.7 Equity

When considering transportation needs to accommodate growth of the community, improvements to the City's bikeway system should be implemented alongside the consideration of enhancements to other transportation modes (i.e. vehicular, transit, and pedestrian). It is also important to make sure that bicycle system improvements benefit the community as a whole, not just a limited geography or population. Reaching out to all regions of the community in workshop settings will provide opportunities for the City's populace to address their comments and suggestions during the planning process.

Many of the policies under the "Encouragement" category, as they pertain to partnering and coordination, also apply to "Equity," as a means to providing bike facilities throughout the City to most potential users.

**GOAL:** Work to encourage *use of bicycles* as a transportation mode throughout the community for the residents, visitors, students and employees of the City of Merced.

### **Policies:**

- Continue to include, where appropriate, an assessment of bike transportation issues in City reports of discretionary projects, and environmental reviews.
- Seek to update the Official City Design Standards to be consistent with the *2013 BTP*, the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* and the *Climate Action Plan*, by inclusion of facilities such as: traffic signal sensors that detect bicycles, and signs beside and on the street that alert motor vehicle drivers to the presence and appropriateness of bicyclists on the street (CAP EM 1.3.9).
- Seek to develop an off-street bikeway and trail system in South Merced (General Plan Policy T-3.2, Implementing Action 3.2.e) (CAP EM 1.3.3).
- Where consistent with City policies, consider adoption of a code amendment concerning bike-related facilities (L-2.10, L-3.5, L-3.3, and T-2.5).

**Related City Policies:** UE-1.2, L-2.7, L-3.3, L-3.6, T-1.1, T-1.6, T-1.7, T-2.1, T-2.2, UD-1.2, SD-1.2, SD-1.3, SD-4.1, EM 1.3.9, EM 1.3.3, and SM (OS-1.1).

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