

3. PLANNING AND POLICY CONTEXT

This section provides an overview of planning and policy documents of Lafayette, Contra Costa County and adjacent jurisdictions that are relevant to the Bikeways Master Plan.

3.1. CITY OF LAFAYETTE

CITY OF LAFAYETTE GENERAL PLAN

The City of Lafayette’s General Plan (2002) provides a set of directives and guidelines regarding future development in Lafayette. One of the seven main themes of the General Plan¹ is to maintain a network of bicycle and pedestrian paths between schools, commercial centers, parks and cultural centers in and around the City. The Circulation Element of the General Plan states that, in general, traffic signals will be designed to “favor pedestrians and bicyclists.” The two exceptions to this rule are at the highly congested Lafayette “Y” – the intersection of Moraga Road, Mt. Diablo Boulevard, Oak Hill Road and First Street—and Mt. Diablo Boulevard. Traffic signals at these two locations will be designed to “balance the needs of vehicular traffic and pedestrians” (p.II-1, Circulation Chapter, Lafayette General Plan). The Circulation element specifically recommends providing effective alternatives to the private automobile, including bikeway facilities.

Goals and policies of the Lafayette General Plan related to development of a comprehensive citywide bikeway network include:

Goal C-8 Promote alternatives to the single-occupant automobile.

Policy C-8.2: Bicycles: Encourage bicycling by making it easier and safer for people to travel by bicycle.

Program C-8.2.1: Update the City’s Master Bikeways Plan. Give priority to bikeways connecting downtown, school, recreation facilities, regional facilities and existing bikeways. Participate in Contra Costa County’s Regional Bicycle Advisory Committee.

Program C-8.2.2: Incorporate bikeways into the design and construction of public and private roadway improvements, wherever feasible.

Program C-8.2.3: Require adequate bicycle parking in new commercial developments, and at the BART station. Encourage adequate bicycle parking in commercial areas.

Program C-8.2.4: Revise the Zoning Ordinance to require that new development located on sites where planned bikeways occur to provide the easement or right-of-way for the bikeway, as appropriate.

¹ City of Lafayette General Plan, October 2002. Page 6.

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Program C-8.2.5: Involve local bicycling organizations in the planning of bikeways throughout the City.

Program C-8.2.6: Utilize grant funding and other means, as appropriate, to acquire rights-of-way needed for a comprehensive bike route system and to provide bike racks and other bicycle-related facilities. Prepare a Bicycle Facilities Plan to identify projects to be programmed into the City’s Capital Improvement Program.

In addition to these bicycle-specific goals and policies, the Lafayette General Plan includes goals and policies that complement the development of an effective bicycle network. These include Goal C-1 to “Develop a safe and efficient circulation system that respects Lafayette’s quality of life and community character” and Goal C-4 to “Coordinate land use and circulation planning.” Policies and programs under these two goals include continued public participation in transportation decisions, ensuring that new developments “pay their fair share of circulation improvements” and ensuring that these improvements include bicycle and pedestrian amenities.²

The General Plan contains maps showing existing and proposed land uses within the City planning limits. **Figure 2-1** shows the Lafayette General Plan Land Use Diagram.

LAFAYETTE ZONING ORDINANCE AND MUNICIPAL CODE

There is currently no bicycle-related language contained in the Lafayette Zoning Ordinance.

Bicycles are addressed within Lafayette Municipal Code’s Title 8 Public Welfare, Morals and Society, in Chapter 8-2 Bicycles. This chapter was last updated in 1972, and should be revised to reference current Caltrans bikeway definitions and to reflect State Code regarding operation of bicycles. Lafayette Municipal Code allows bicycles to ride on the sidewalk; requires all residents of Lafayette to register their bicycle with the Contra Costa Sheriff’s Department, (925) 283-3680, for a dollar fee; restricts cyclists from locking their bicycles to parking meters; and does not permit cyclists to exit a bicycle lane except at intersections, when making a permitted U-turn or when turning right into a driveway or roadway.

OTHER ONGOING LAFAYETTE PLANNING PROJECTS

Traffic Calming Guidebook

In 2003 the City of Lafayette published a Traffic Calming Guidebook to be used by residents to develop community-wide traffic calming policies. The guidebook outlines the educational, enforcement and engineering techniques that can be used to reduce traffic speeds and volumes. Many solutions rely on marketing and advertising strategies such as signs and bumper stickers to educate the community about safe, respectful driving. Some tools, for example, forming a speed watch group and taking neighborhood pledges, promote face-to-face interaction, with the idea that people will drive responsibly when they are connected to the neighborhood. The program relies on residents to work together to alleviate their traffic problems, and provides a public forum for review and prioritization of all traffic calming requests. The guidebook outlines the process a neighborhood can take to bring traffic calming requests to the public forum.

² Program C-1.1.6, Policy C-4.2, Program C-4.2.2., Lafayette General Plan.

Lafayette Master Walkways Plan

The Lafayette Master Walkways Plan (adopted in 1999 and updated in February 2006) guides the Circulation Commission and staff in providing Lafayette with a system of walkways that will improve the safety and efficiency of walking along roads well traveled by pedestrians and motorists. A Master Walkways List has been developed as part of the plan. The list has been prioritized, with the highest priority given to walkways that are located in the immediate downtown area, then to those connecting or completing a connection to the downtown and the schools. The plan also identifies methodology for requesting walkway construction or improvements, lists funding sources and outlines maintenance responsibilities.

Bikeway planning and installation is specifically excluded from the Master Walkways Plan. According to the plan, in Lafayette, bicycles are allowed on sidewalks and walkways. The plan also requires that walkways that coexist with bikeways should have a minimum width of 8 feet. This eight-foot width meets Caltrans minimum width for a two-way bicycle path.

Lafayette Master Trails Plan

The City is currently revising and updating the Master Trails Plan, last updated in 1989. In the sixteen years since the last plan was adopted, the City's plans for trails have dramatically changed, as new easements have been acquired, new trails have been built, and some plans for proposed trails have been abandoned. The plan identifies trail design standards, presents strategies for acquisition, funding, and construction of trails, presents a plan for maintenance and safety responsibilities, and summarizes the environmental analysis completed for the Trails Master Plan. The plan also contains a map of proposed and existing trails.

Trails are intended primarily for pedestrian use. Cyclists are permitted on hard surface trails only. The trail design standards do not meet minimum bikeway design standards. Minimum trail widths are 3 feet, with a 5 to 20 foot easement. Minimum bridge widths are four feet, with non-skid surface and railings. These minimum trail widths are much narrower than the current Caltrans recommended minimum bikeway width of 8 feet on a two-way bikeway.

The Trail Master Plan provides basic guidance for signage: trail markers are recommended at every junction and at trailheads and warning signage is recommended on streets that cross the trail, but are not necessarily designed for use by bicyclists.

City-owned trails are maintained by the City's Public Works Department and coordinated by the City's Parks, Trails and Recreation Department.

Downtown Street Improvement Master Implementation Plan

The City of Lafayette adopted its current Downtown Street Improvement Plan in 1988. The Downtown Improvement Plan is intended to guide developers and staff in making improvements to street frontage in the downtown area of Lafayette. The goal of the plan is to develop a cohesive, positive visual image for Lafayette's downtown while providing amenities to make the downtown a more comfortable, safer and enjoyable place. The plan area encompasses the business district south of Highway 24 and is limited to five major streets:

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1. Mt. Diablo Boulevard from Risa Road to Pleasant Hill Road
2. Oak Hill Road south of the freeway
3. First Street between the freeway and Golden Gate Way
4. Golden Gate Way
5. Moraga Road from St. Mary's Road to Mt. Diablo Boulevard

While primarily intended for improvement of the pedestrian experience, the plan also includes design guidelines that affect cyclists. The plan recommends installing bicycle racks at Lafayette Plaza, the EBRPD trail and other destinations as sidewalk width permits. Additionally, street improvements, such as trees, medians and crosswalks slow or calm traffic and improve the cycling environment. Although the original plan recommends “wave” type bike racks, the 1998 Standard Streetscape Specifications recommends the more satisfactory “loop and post” racks.³



Cyclist in Downtown Lafayette

3.2. CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

In 2003, the Contra Costa Transportation Authority adopted a Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan with the intent of expanding bicycle and pedestrian facilities, improving the safety of these facilities and increasing walking and biking within the County. The Countywide plan encourages improving links to transit, developing safety and education programs, completing regional connections and collaborating with local agencies and citizens to build a countywide network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Two of the seventeen priority bicycle projects identified in the Countywide Plan have segments within Lafayette: the State Route 24 Bikeway project and the Lamorinda Linkages project. The State Route 24 Bikeway consists of 6.7 miles of on and off street bicycle facilities paralleling Highway 24 in Orinda, Lafayette, and Walnut Creek (County project #553). The Lamorinda recommendations consist of 3.9 miles of bike routes within Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga. The Countywide Plan also supports efforts to connect the Lafayette-Moraga Trail to the Iron Horse Trail in Walnut Creek.

3.3. REGIONAL POLICIES

EAST BAY REGIONAL PARKS DISTRICT (EBRPD) MASTER PLAN

Adopted in 1997, the East Bay Regional Park District's Master Plan outlines goals and policies consistent with the District's vision of its future. EBRPD's Mission Statement includes the goal of the continued provision of trails. EBRPD's parks are home to over 1000 miles of existing trails, and EBRPD reports that trail use is on the rise. EBRPD aims to expand its system of trails linking parklands with major population centers.

³ Though “wave” racks provide more spaces for cyclists (4-6) than “post and loop” racks (2), “wave” racks are less satisfactory. They take up more sidewalk space than “post and loop” racks, generally do not have enough room between the “waves” to allow multiple bicycles to easily lock a wheel and a frame to the rack, and are often improperly used by cyclists who park their bicycles parallel to the rack, preventing other cyclists from using the rack.

EAST BAY MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT (EBMUD) TRAILS

EBMUD owns and manages the Lafayette Reservoir Recreation Area, including the multi-use trail that surrounds the Reservoir. The agency permits bicycles on the paved portion of the trail on Tuesdays and Thursdays from noon until closing and permits bicycles on the paved Lakeside Trail on Sundays from opening until 11:00 a.m. Bicycles are not permitted on any other EBMUD trails. Hours and days of the week when bicycling is permitted are subject to change.

The EBMUD Aqueduct provides a possible opportunity for development of another off-street multi-modal path. The Aqueduct runs through downtown, and then heads northeast toward the Acalanes High School.

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