

4.04 BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NEEDS

A. Bicycle Needs

Currently, bicycle facilities are nonexistent on USH 51. This includes urban as well as rural segments of the roadway. Section 3.02 of this report provides a more-detailed analysis of this assessment.

There are no acceptable alternate routes through the corridor. There are no side trails, and there is no continuous network of parallel side streets or roads. In addition to public feedback regarding the need for improvements to the bicycle facilities within the study corridor, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also voiced a similar concern. The DNR noted that some trail improvements are planned including a connection between McFarland and Madison’s Capital City Trail system, and conversion of the WSOR rail line to a multi-use trail as a long-term goal.

1. Stoughton to McFarland

Figure 4.04-1 is adapted from the State Bicycle Map. It shows all state highways, county highways, and local roads between Stoughton and McFarland.

While the map does not evaluate local roads for bicycling adequacy, it rates all state and county highways. Bicycling is prohibited on IH 39/90 (in the northeast corner of the map) and “not recommended” on USH 51, STH 138, CTH B (west), and CTH N. Only CTH AB and CTH B (east) provide “moderate conditions.”

The map further illustrates that there are few if any alternate routes for bicyclists that wisely avoid USH 51.

2. Within Stoughton

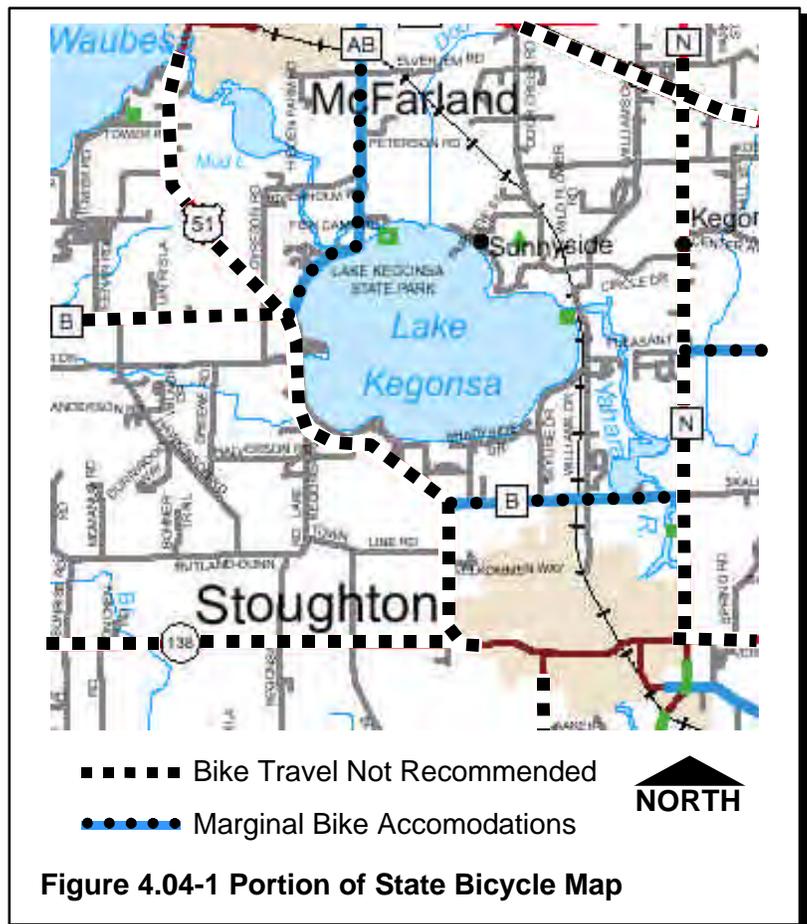


Figure 4.04-1 Portion of State Bicycle Map

USH 51 is the City's main street in name and function. It is the major east-west route and directly services many of the City's commercial buildings. Stoughton's scale and character support bicycling for recreation and work-related trips; the most direct route for many of these trips likely involves USH 51.

As discussed in Section 3.02, the Federal Highway Administration's Bicycle Compatibility Index predicts that a bicyclist would feel moderately uncomfortable on the four-lane portion of USH 51 within Stoughton and extremely uncomfortable on the two-lane portions of USH 51 within Stoughton.

The Wisconsin & Southern Railroad tracks and the Yahara River disrupt the continuity of local streets and limit east-west mobility. Besides USH 51, there is no continuous local street between the east and west limits of the City. CTH B north of Stoughton does not have facilities to accommodate bicyclists that want to bypass the downtown area.

North-south mobility across USH 51 is facilitated by signalized intersections within the City.

3. Within McFarland

The limits of this study preclude a full assessment of bicyclist needs within the USH 51 corridor through McFarland. Generally, bicyclists must use and/or cross USH 51 to access Babcock Park and other areas south of McFarland. CTH AB, which also runs north/south, is nearly two miles east of USH 51.

As discussed in Section 3.02, the Federal Highway Administration's Bicycle Compatibility Index predicts that a bicyclist would feel very uncomfortable on USH 51 in McFarland.

B. Pedestrian Needs

Although pedestrian and bicyclist needs can conflict, often they can also complement each other. In general, pedestrian needs are more localized than bicyclist needs. Outside Stoughton, sidewalks are nonexistent on the corridor; within Stoughton, they are not always continuous.

1. Within Stoughton

Within Stoughton but generally outside the downtown area, several characteristics of USH 51 present mobility and safety concerns to pedestrians:

- High traffic volumes
- Higher speeds (45 mph or greater on far west side)
- Wide cross section (44 to 48 feet)
- Few signalized intersections

- Lack of pedestrian indicators at three approaches of CTH N intersection
- Discontinuous sidewalks
- No sidewalks (on far west side)
- No marked pedestrian crossings (on far west side)

As noted in Section 4.01 A, safety improvements have recently been completed within Stoughton. Among these improvements are changes to pedestrian signage and signals downtown. Evaluation of the effectiveness of these improvements will require observation over the next few years.

2. Within McFarland

The limits of this study preclude a full assessment of pedestrian needs within the USH 51 corridor through McFarland. However, there are several characteristics of USH 51 that present mobility and safety concerns to pedestrians within McFarland:

- High traffic volumes
- Higher speeds (40 mph or greater)
- No parallel sidewalks
- Few marked pedestrian crossings
- Wide cross section (48 feet or greater)

Pedestrians crossing at unmarked locations are a particular safety concern. Pedestrians must cross four lanes of traffic. At the CTH MN intersection there are warning signs with lights but there are no pavement markings or pedestrian refuges. This concern arose frequently during public involvement activities. The Village and the Dane County Parks Department have discussed a grade separated pedestrian crossing at Babcock Park on the south side of McFarland. Further investigation is needed.