

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CIRCULATION PLAN



SECTION 3, Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation Plan

PLAN OVERVIEW

The Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation Plan is the product of community concerns and interest in creating better opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists in Eagle River. Some of the interest is related to improved recreation opportunities and better links between community nodes, but much of the concern is related to safety. Designated pedestrian crossings of the New Glenn Highway and the Old Glenn Highway are limited. Both highways carry large amounts of traffic and there is a clear public perception that crossing these roadways is dangerous.

This plan seeks to provide a framework for staging improvements to the community's pedestrian and cycling network. Based on public input and a review of existing facilities and deficiencies, the plan specifically identifies and recommends future locations/upgrades of sidewalks and paths in order to achieve an interrelated walking/bicycling network that accomplishes the following:

- Improves safety and access
- Connects activity nodes (for example, parks, schools, retail businesses, the Boys and Girls Clubs, and the library)
- Creates a more "pedestrian friendly" Central Business District that better supports commercial and community activities

- Enhances recreation and tourism
- Increases opportunities for bike commuters
- Improves access for community members without vehicles, especially the young

The plan first examines existing conditions and identifies nodes or activities that require pedestrian linkages at a community-wide scale. Next, the plan identifies existing trails and walkways that support these linkages. Finally, the plan recommends a comprehensive list of projects that would complete a community-wide network of walks and trails.

This plan and the Areawide Trails Plan both include trail recommendations for the study area. Trail recommendations found in this plan supersede those trail recommendations found in the Areawide Trails Plan for the study area. The trail recommendations for the areas outside this plan's study area will remain unchanged. These considerations were made with the assistance and approval of the Eagle River - Chugiak Parks and Recreation Board of Supervisors.

Eleven projects are identified for inclusion in the pedestrian/bicycle plan. The plan prioritizes the projects as high, medium, or low, based on safety, value of the linkage established, estimated number of residents served, and cost/affordability. Following is a listing of the projects, with a short description of each.

A. High Priority Projects

1. **Eagle River Town Center Walkways.** This project is made up of a number of smaller projects which support the goal of establishing a walkable

town center identified in the Urban Design Plan. Specifically, it improves links between the Old Glenn Highway and Business Boulevard, improves and connects linkages within a pedestrian zone between Business Boulevard and the Old Glenn Highway, improves walkways on the Old Glenn Highway and identifies a new pedestrian crossing of the Old Glenn Highway.

2. **Glenn Highway/Bike Trail Connection.** This project establishes a connection across the South Interchange allowing cyclists to continue on the New Glenn Highway Bike Path without having to enter town by way of VFW Drive. This project would be completed as part of a programmed interchange improvement. In the short term, better directional signage and a clearly marked bike route would eliminate existing confusion.
3. **Link from Commons Park to the New Glenn Highway.** In the future this will be the primary link between the town center and the New Glenn Highway Bike Path.
4. **Designated Bike Lane on Eagle River Road.** This project would designate a bike lane on Eagle River Road for bicycle commuters and for individuals travelling to the Eagle River Nature Center. The existing pathway is unsafe for cyclists because of existing driveways and grade changes.

B. Medium Priority Projects

5. **Eagle River Crossing.** There has been a desire for some time to improve the link between the community and the campground on the south side of Eagle River. The connection can be made now

by way of the New Glenn Highway Bike Path, but it is not a very direct route. The new connection would also support a link to the new high school and a housing development in the area.

6. **Bicycle/Pedestrian Link Between Commons Park and Schroeder Park.** This link would consist of a bike lane identified on existing roadways. Existing roads are residential in nature.

C. Low Priority Projects

7. **North Interchange Bike Path Connection.** The North Interchange Bike Path Connection uses a series of tunnels to connect the bike path on the Old Glenn Highway with the new Powder Ridge Subdivision. The connection is made without on-grade crossings of existing roadways.
8. **Grade-Separated Crossing of the New Glenn Highway.** A bicycle/pedestrian overpass of the New Glenn Highway is identified at the location where the Commons Park Bike Path and the New Glenn Highway Bike Path intersect. This would support the existing subdivision on the west side of the New Glenn Highway, as well as the Powder Ridge Subdivision.

D. Programmed Projects

The projects described below have already been constructed or programmed for construction. All of them are important to the community and have been included in this report because they are required elements of the overall plan. Eagle River can expect construction of these projects within the next few years.

- 9. Old Glenn Highway Rehabilitation.** In addition to repaving and dealing with drainage issues on the Old Glenn Highway, this project includes new walkways.
- 10. Eagle River Loop Road Improvements.** The upgrade of Eagle River Loop Road will include walkway/trail improvements. This project will provide a pedestrian connection between the downtown and the intersection of Eagle River Loop Road with Eagle River Road.
- 11. Business Boulevard Safety Improvements.** A major upgrade to Business Boulevard was constructed in 2003. The project includes new walkways on either side of the road, where none previously existed. It also includes several new crosswalks along Business Boulevard.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Eagle River has many excellent bicycle/pedestrian facilities in place. By taking a comprehensive approach to linking these facilities and establishing new facilities that support community growth, Eagle River will become a much better place to walk or bike.

Many communities in the American West, including Eagle River have been designed primarily to accommodate autos. This automobile-focused development pattern disperses commercial and community activities, and has left some towns without a classic “downtown”, or a clearly identifiable “Main Street” where residents and visitors can walk to reach a wide range of businesses and public facilities.

An automobile-oriented circulation system creates difficulties

for pedestrians and cyclists. In the center of town, busy parking lots and frequent curb cuts along existing sidewalks create an unappealing and unsafe walking and cycling environment. During busy shopping and commuting times, pedestrians and cyclists feel especially threatened. As one Eagle River resident explained at a public meeting, “In town you can’t help an old lady walk across the street—you’d both get run over. You have to drive her across.”

Moreover, in auto-focused communities, individual commercial activities, public facilities, and residences typically are spread far apart. Distances that are easily covered by car discourage pedestrian activity--especially in the winter. Community members who do not drive, particularly the younger residents, are restricted in their mobility and access to community activities.

As an auto-focused community, Eagle River, and especially its commercial core, is not “pedestrian friendly”. However, unlike some communities developed within recent decades, Eagle River is not defined by its so-called “sprawl” development. The town’s scale and natural setting attract residents and provide high quality of life. In fact, the community provides world-class scenic walking and cycling opportunities for residents and visitors just a few miles from the core commercial area.

The challenge and the opportunity is to bring the high quality of life found outside the core commercial area into Eagle River’s Central Business District. One of the primary means for achieving this is through improving the core commercial area’s pedestrian environment. Therefore, this next section of the Eagle River Central Business District Revitalization Plan is devoted to planning for improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure within the core commercial area, with links throughout the community.



Figure 3-1 The auto-dominated Old Glenn Highway is not a comfortable place for pedestrians.

Pedestrian and bicycle trail data was gathered from a number of sources including the Anchorage Area-Wide Trails Plan Map for Chugiak – Eagle River (1997), anecdotal information, field examination, aerial photography, and pedestrian data collected as part of the Business Boulevard Safety Improvements Project.

A. Commercial Center Circulation

Eagle River's commercial center, as described previously, was designed and constructed for the convenience of automobiles. Paradoxically, this "urban area" has more sidewalks than any part of town, yet it feels the least safe for pedestrians. As a result, the existing infrastructure is rarely used, except by those who do not drive. In fact, one resident of ten years was surprised to discover that there are sidewalks on either side of the Old Glenn Highway. Most residents would never think about the possibility of walking between downtown errands.



Figure 3-2 An informal footpath from the Old Glenn down to Business Blvd. demonstrates the need for a formalized link.

This pattern has developed primarily because of the following existing characteristics within the core commercial area's pedestrian and cycling environment:

1. **Discontinuity.** Existing trails and sidewalks within the core provide only haphazard access. Key links are missing, particularly between activities on the Old Glenn and Business Boulevard. This discourages pedestrian activity, but also leads pedestrians to develop informal foot paths, to cut across parking lots, and generally to take risks in order to reach their destination.
2. **Conflicts with Traffic/Lack of "Defensible Pedestrian Space".** The movement of traffic is a key force shaping the core area's pedestrian environment. Existing pedestrian facilities do not provide a sense of protection or separation from the hustle and bustle of traffic. Rather, pedestrians are faced with the following:



Figure 3-3 Pedestrian waits at the intersection of Business Blvd. and the Old Glenn

- Frequent curb cuts: Pedestrians walking on sidewalks are impacted by the numerous driveways that cut across the sidewalk. In particular, the Old Glenn has numerous curb cuts and drivers tend to be focused on traffic instead of pedestrians. Drivers pulling in and out of businesses could potentially hit a pedestrian or cyclist on the sidewalk.
- Traffic Speed/Volume: Sidewalks along the Old Glenn are immediately adjacent to heavy traffic which is often moving between 35 and 45 miles per hour. The lack of buffer or separation from traffic, also known as a lack of “defensible pedestrian space”, makes roadside walking a loud and uncomfortable experience.
- Busy Intersections: Intersections along the Old Glenn in the core commercial area are perceived as



Figure 3-4 Poor maintenance contributes to an unattractive appearance

dangerous by local residents. Although busy, they are not particularly congested compared to other major intersections in the Anchorage Bowl. While the busiest locations have pedestrian-activated crossings, several intersections do not have a traffic light or crosswalk.

- Infrequent Crosswalks: Pedestrian crossings are few and far between on the Old Glenn Highway which leads pedestrians to “run when they can”. While it is unsafe to cross five lanes of heavy traffic in the middle of a block, many pedestrians take the risk.

3. Poor Maintenance / Unattractive Appearance. Throughout much of the downtown, existing trails are poorly maintained and unattractive. During summer months the walkways are littered with gravel left over from winter street maintenance. Edges of walkways are poorly defined and the space between the back of curb and edge of walk consists of bare soil or weeds.



Figure 3-5 Lack of winter maintenance makes walkways especially hazardous.

This conveys the message that pedestrians are unimportant. The condition reflects on the community at a broader level as well, because it is equally unattractive to passing motorists.

4. Lack of Winter Maintenance. Most of the existing sidewalks and trails throughout Eagle River are not usable during the winter months. The walkways immediately adjacent to the Old Glenn Highway are plowed. This is done by lifting the blade and pushing snow to the back of the walk. As snow berms build over the course of the winter, the walks become narrower and pedestrians are constrained between the high snow berms and heavy traffic. Although passable it is not comfortable. Many residents questioned the feasibility of travelling by foot during the winter months.

B. Community-Wide Circulation

In the broader context, Eagle River can be a wonderful place to be a pedestrian or cyclist. The Eagle River Road

and the New Glenn Highway trails are examples of facilities that are available to area residents and visitors. In terms of walking or cycling as transportation, a significant base of existing trails provides residents many opportunities.

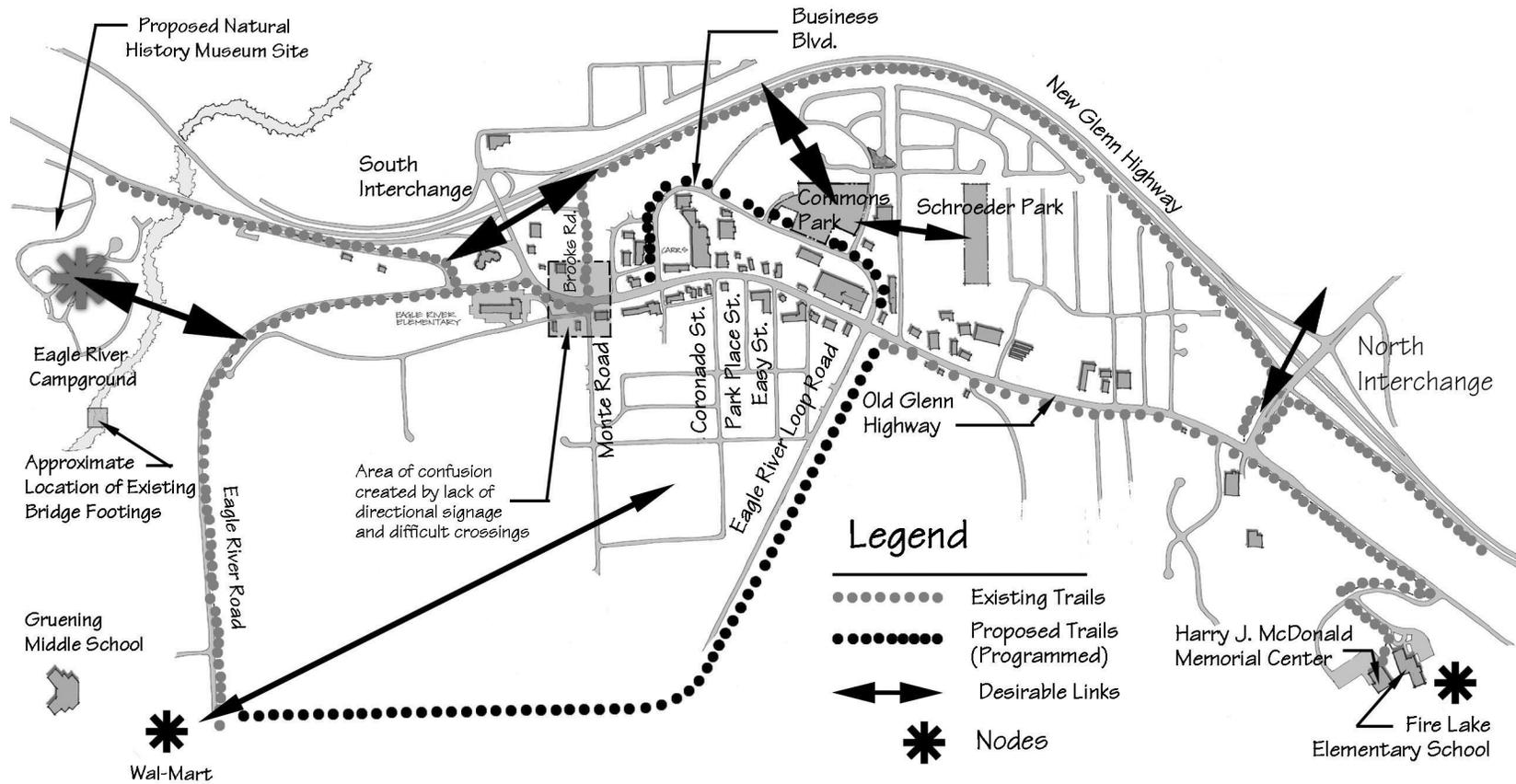
The community scale map, Figure 3-6, shows existing trails which provide Eagle River residents and visitors with many recreational walking and cycling opportunities. However, as a community-wide “network” there are deficiencies which make cross-community travel difficult.

1. Nodes to be Connected. Key links from the urban commercial district to the following pedestrian nodes were examined. In some cases connections are adequate. In others, connections need strengthening or don’t exist.

- Fire Lake Elementary/Harry J. McDonald Memorial Center in the north; (adequate connection)
- The Eagle River Campground (weak connection)
- The Walmart retail outlet at the intersection of Eagle River Loop Road and Eagle River Road; (weak connection)

2. Residential Links. While many neighborhoods have safe access to existing trails, some links are nonexistent or require strengthening. Following are two residential links that would improve residential access to the central business district.

- There are no sidewalks from the well-established neighborhood east of the Old Glenn Highway that would provide pedestrian links to the Old Glenn Highway. Sidewalks should be developed on Coronado Street and Monte Road to improve these links.



Pedestrian/Bicycle Plan Community Nodes & Existing Facilities



Figure 3-6, Community Nodes and Existing Facilities

- A worn footpath indicates a link from the Glenn Highway Bike Path across the Glenn Highway to a sub-division on the west side. This crossing is made mostly by young people who use the link as a shortcut instead of walking to the South Interchange.

3. Design Deficiencies. In some locations, existing facilities require upgrading to meet greater safety and accessibility standards:

- The bike path adjacent to Eagle River Road crosses over numerous driveways and has sudden grade changes.
- The intersection of the Old Glenn Highway and Eagle River Road is perceived as especially dangerous for cyclists.

4. Lack of Directional Signage. In some cases where trails or trail connectors do not exist, quiet side roads can serve pedestrians and cyclists. Designation of “bicycle routes” and signage could help residents and visitors find these safe alternative routes, in addition to alerting drivers. Cyclists currently entering Eagle River from the New Glenn Highway Bike Path are directed through town with good signage until they come to Brooks Road, where the signage abruptly stops. Signage is needed to direct cyclists back to the New Glenn Highway by way of Brooks Road.

5. Lack of Winter Maintenance. As explained earlier, existing sidewalks and trails are effectively not usable for several months of the year if they are not maintained. Snow removal on roads can make the situation on sidewalks, and along the edge of roads worse for pedestrians and cyclists.

C. Pedestrian Counts and Pedestrian Usage

There are no current pedestrian counts for the various intersections on the Old Glenn Highway. There is a significant amount of data available for Business Boulevard that was prepared by the engineering firm USKH as background for the Business Boulevard Safety Improvements Project. The pedestrian movements identified by USKH for the Business Boulevard area were conducted during the month of November in 1997. This is not normally the best time for pedestrians, yet there was a significant amount of pedestrian activity throughout the area. As might be expected, the Post Office generated a lot of activity and a strong pedestrian interrelationship exists between the multi-family residential area south of Business Boulevard, the Carrs grocery store, and the Post Office. The transit facility was also a major hub of pedestrian activity. Peak times for pedestrian use appear to be between 2:30 PM and 6:00 PM on weekdays.

Several school buses stop and discharge passengers in the Business Boulevard area due to heavy traffic on the Old Glenn Highway. Many of the passengers discharged from the school buses actually cross the Old Glenn Highway to the east side. The transit facility also contributes pedestrians, but primarily adults who also frequently cross to the east side of the Old Glenn.

The maximum pedestrian count in any two-hour period was 89 individuals. Most of the pedestrians departing the Business Boulevard area accessed the Old Glenn Highway from the alley separating the MEA electric substation and the Carrs grocery store. At this point, a significant number crossed to Coronado Street without the benefit of a cross walk. Others proceeded south to the intersection of Business Boulevard and the Old Glenn Highway, where a signalized crosswalk is available.

In July of 1999, the intersections of the Old Glenn Highway with Business Boulevard, Coronado Street, Park Place Street, Easy Street, and Hanson Street were observed for three two-hour periods. One was on a Saturday morning, one was on a Monday afternoon, and the final was on a Thursday spanning the lunch hour. The highest count was the Thursday lunch hour, which had a total of 18 people crossing the Old Glenn Highway at all of the intersections combined. On the Saturday count there were a total of six pedestrian crossings over a two-hour period. In all cases, fewer than half of the pedestrians crossed at signalized intersections.

D. Regulatory Requirements

The Old Glenn Highway is a state highway. This allows federal funding of new projects associated with the roadway. The state highway designation carries strict requirements with respect to geometry, signalization, and pedestrian crossings. The boxed text to the right is an excerpt from the Alaska Traffic Manual Supplement dated February 11, 2000.

E. The Old Glenn Highway

The Old Glenn Highway is probably the greatest pedestrian concern for residents of Eagle River. The state highway status and circulation requirements for through traffic limit the options for significant pedestrian use. Throughout much of the CBD adequate separation between the highway and walking paths cannot be achieved without acquiring additional right of way. In many cases this would severely impact adjacent business owners.

The Chugiak - Eagle River Transportation Plan recommends the use of access management techniques, which includes a center median and left turn lanes at intersections. This

The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities shall classify, designate, and mark highways under its jurisdiction and shall provide a uniform system of marking and posting these highways. The system of marking and posting shall correlate with and shall, as far as possible, conform to the recommendations of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices as adopted by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices identifies the following warrants for creating a signalized pedestrian crossing.

1. Pedestrian Volume:

- A. 100 or more pedestrians for each of any four hours in the course of a day, or*
- B. 190 pedestrians during any one hour.*

2. Traffic Gaps.

In addition to the minimum pedestrian volume stated above, there shall be fewer than 60 gaps per hour in the traffic stream that would provide enough time for a pedestrian to cross.

3. Adjacent Signals:

The above warrants apply only where the nearest signalized intersection is a minimum of 300 feet distant.

would improve conditions for pedestrians. The roadway would not feel as wide and pedestrians would benefit from a safe zone in the center. This plan has met with limited community support because of the inconvenience it imposes on vehicular traffic. A key concern is that vehicles would have to make U-turns to reach destination points.

It should be noted that significant improvements for pedestrians on the Old Glenn Highway may negatively impact motorists.

Observation and previous pedestrian counts done by USKH engineers indicate that there does not appear to be enough pedestrian use on the Old Glenn Highway to warrant additional signalized intersections based on the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

The use of a grade-separated crossing of the Old Glenn Highway was considered. The problem with this alternative is that pedestrians rarely go out of their way to use an overpass unless traffic is really dangerous or they are channeled to that point. An example would be a bike path leading up to an overpass. An additional constraint with grade separated crossings is the requirement to meet A.D.A. accessibility standards. The huge ramps required would be a major impact on the city center. At this time it is unlikely that an overpass would be an effective means of helping pedestrians cross the Old Glenn Highway

Many other communities struggle with the same problems of major arterials passing through the town core. Some communities have actually discouraged pedestrian use of these corridors to avoid the conflicts that inevitably arise. Our recommendation is that, to the extent possible, conditions should be improved for pedestrians on the Old Glenn. This would be accomplished through improved appearance and better use of materials.

The Urban Design Plan calls for the establishment of a pedestrian core between the Old Glenn Highway and Business Boulevard where traffic is less of a problem, parking is plentiful, and the magnets that normally attract pedestrians are already present.

F. Criteria for Establishing Pedestrian/Cycling Network Improvement Priorities

Each deficiency in Eagle River's pedestrian and cycling environment presents a clear opportunity for improvement

and investment. However, the community's ability to implement or afford infrastructure development projects and year-round maintenance is a key issue. Therefore, this section takes a special approach to identifying the improvements required to achieve a functional community-wide pedestrian and cycling network.

Infrastructure projects recommended in this section are not intended to require special bonds. Instead, recommendations focus on using federal, state, and municipal monies as they become available for the most strategic and timely projects. The approach focuses on maximizing coordination with the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) program and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. Coordination can help keep Eagle River's interests on the funding agenda, and help the community to seek special funding. TEA-21 federal grants in particular should be sought for pedestrian and cycling facility improvements.

Other potential sources of funding include parks and recreation bond measures and the Chugiak-Birchwood-Eagle River Road Service Area, (CBERRRSA). Eagle River has passed two bond measures for parks and recreation improvements, but none of those funds could currently be used for any of the walkway improvements identified as part of this study. To utilize bond funds, specific projects would have to be packaged and presented to the entire Municipality as a bond measure. Historically, parks bond measures have been difficult to pass, particularly in Eagle River. This may become a more viable alternative at some point in the future.

The CBERRRSA Board of Supervisors has had very limited involvement with trails and walkway projects in the past and has not expressed any desire to expand its role to include this work. Traditionally, this Board has dealt specifically with repair and maintenance of roads. There is a good working

relationship between the Eagle River-Chugiak Parks and Recreation Board of Supervisors and CBERRRSA and it is probable that Parks and Recreation would take the lead in obtaining funds for the construction and maintenance of trails.

Maintenance of new trails is of particular importance. A condition of TEA-21 funding is a commitment to maintain new walkways. Currently, CBERRRSA does not maintain walkways in Eagle River. By mutual agreement, Parks and Recreation has agreed to take on maintenance of new trails, provided the trails meet Municipal standards. With the addition of Commons Park and other planned improvements, the ability of the Parks and Recreation staff to take on additional maintenance responsibilities without additional funding is doubtful. Ongoing maintenance for new trails and walkways is likely to be a negotiated settlement between CBERRRSA and the Parks and Recreation Board of Supervisors.

Recommendations are prioritized based on a generalized assessment of the following public values:

- Safety improvement achieved
- Value of linkages established
- Number of residents served
- Cost/affordability

This will allow the community to take an incremental, but comprehensive approach to improving their pedestrian and cycling network.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS

Eleven projects are identified below for inclusion in the Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation Plan. The projects have been rated on the criteria stated above. Ratings are based

on a continuum that includes HIGH, MEDIUM, and LOW public value. Communities don't always grow as planned and what appears to be a priority one year may be less important in following years. Those projects identified as high priority would be of significant benefit to the community today. Projects in the medium and low priority categories should be reassessed as the community grows. Because of the overlapping nature of the revitalization effort, particularly in the core commercial area, in some cases readers are referred to the Urban Design Study (Section Two), and the Commons Park Master Plan (Section Four) for recommendations. Figure 3-11 presents a map identifying the extent and locations of the 11 projects.

A. High-Priority Projects

1. *The Eagle River Town Center Walkways Project.*

This project actually consists of a number of smaller projects. The objective of this project is to reinforce the Urban Design Goal of establishing a town center. Seamless pedestrian connections can be developed from the east side of the Old Glenn Highway to Business Boulevard and to the Commons Park. Additionally, a strong north/south pedestrian connection can be made from Valley River Center to Centerfield Drive. The walkways would be situated adjacent to existing businesses instead of busy streets. The pedestrian paths would directly link most of the major magnets in the community center. Projects of this type have been successfully instituted in a number of locations. An example is University Center in Seattle. University Center once existed as an ordinary mall surrounded by acres of parking (see Figure 3-10). The area has been reinvented by establishing a village concept with strong pedestrian links to surrounding residential areas.

The Town Center Walkways Project would serve four key functions:

- Create safe public access. Current informal access across the Old Glenn and down the slope over private land (trespassing) is unsafe. This route is heavily used by young people moving between Bosco's Comics Shop, The Boys and Girls Clubs, various fast food restaurants, and Commons Park. The "Town Center Walkway" would link businesses, public facilities, and parking.
- Facilitate special events in Commons Park. Such a pedestrian walkway would link numerous large parking lots within the loop between Business Boulevard and the Old Glenn Highway which are utilized during events. It would also direct visitors and those arriving at the transit facility to area businesses.
- Encourage "park and walk" shopping. This would reduce the need to jump in a car between tasks and encourage casual pedestrian use.
- Provide New Glenn Highway Bike Path users with direct access to core area businesses. This could encourage inclusion of Eagle River as a "lunch break", or a destination point for trail users.

Individual components of this project are identified on Figure 3-7 and include the following:

- Ⓐ A link between the Old Glenn Highway and the Business Boulevard area that meets A.D.A. accessibility requirements. This would be accomplished as part of the Community Center Project. Accessibility would be accomplished by

way of an elevator that is integral to the Community Center. A separate stairway would also improve this link.

- Ⓑ Mid-Block Crossing of the Old Glenn Highway. A new pedestrian crossing is identified between Coronado Street and Park Place Street. This location offers the opportunity for a protected median in the center of the Old Glenn Highway. The location is also supported by current pedestrian usage.
- Ⓒ The promenade link between the cinema building and Valley River Center. This link will provide a key connection toward a continuous pedestrian walkway that extends from Valley River Center to Centerfield Drive. A pedestrian walkway that utilizes quality materials and site furnishings within a parking area can be highly successful. Figure 3-7 shows a similar walkway placed in the parking lot of what had previously been a non-descript shopping mall. To implement this project, the Municipality would have to acquire a walkway easement.
- Ⓓ Pedestrian Gateway. The Pedestrian Gateway would create a pedestrian space in an area currently used primarily for vehicular circulation, located between the cinema building and the adjacent restaurant. The plan would include a pedestrian walkway, landscaping, and the potential for an outdoor eating area to serve the adjacent restaurant. The project could be accomplished through an agreement between the private property owner and the Municipality.

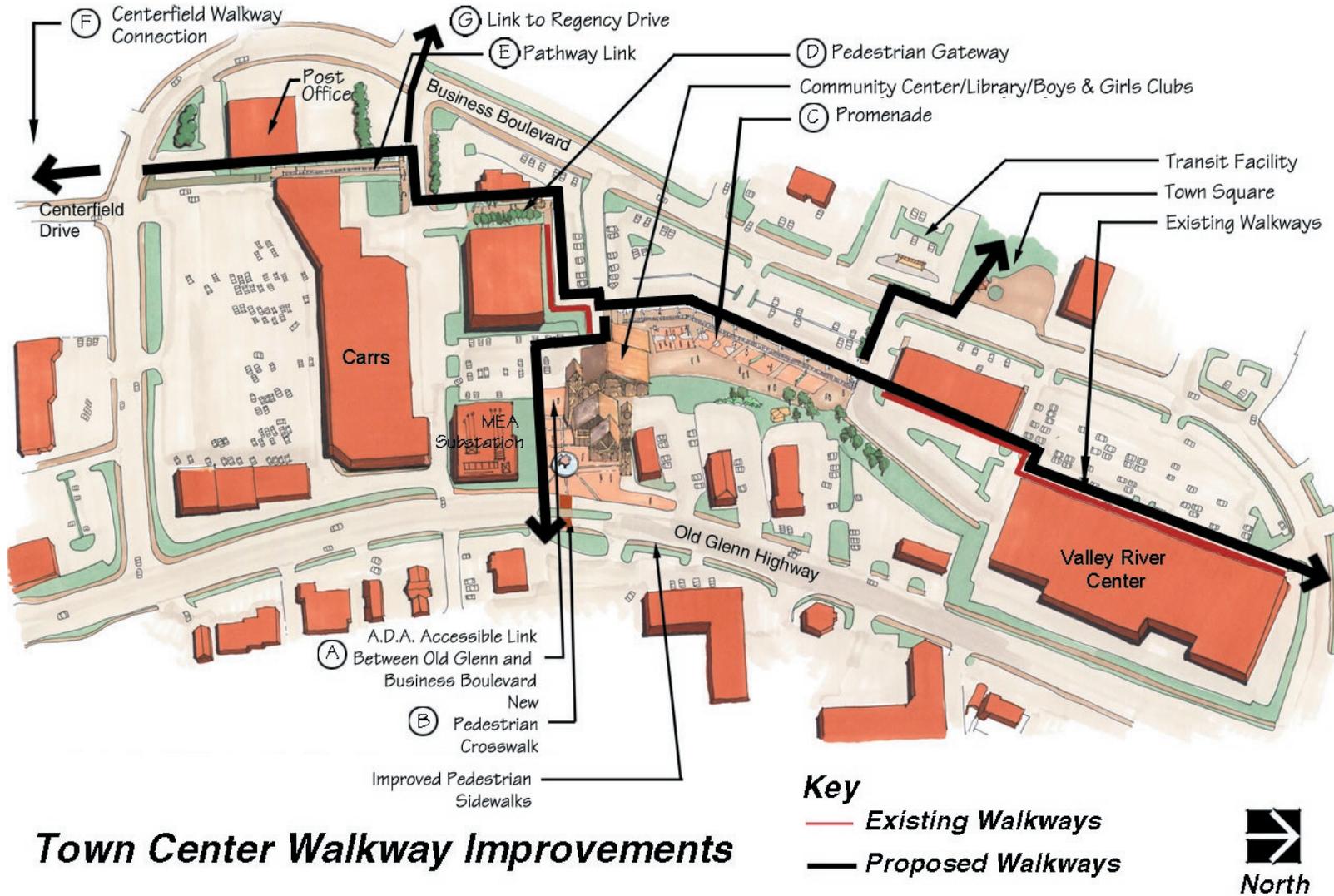


Figure 3-7 Town Center Walkway Improvements

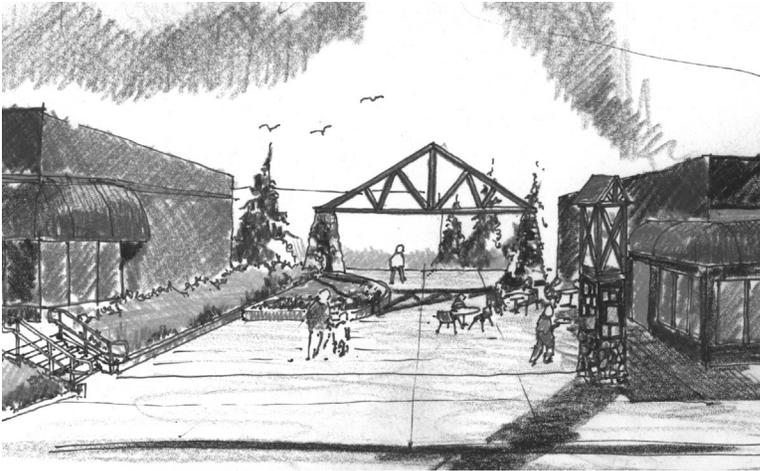


Figure 3-8 Sketch of the pedestrian gateway

Ⓔ Pathway link between Carrs and Centerfield Drive. This is another important link in establishing a continuous walkway between Valley River Center and Centerfield Drive. The space is currently used informally as a walkway without the benefit of paving. The pathway would be implemented by obtaining a sidewalk easement.

Ⓕ Centerfield Walkway Connection. These improvements would be accomplished within the public right of way on the northwest side of Centerfield Drive. It would link the town center walkways with the existing New Glenn Highway Bike Path by way of the existing connection to Brooks Road.

Ⓖ The link to Regency Drive provides access to existing multi-family and single family housing and to future business development on the north side of Regency Drive.

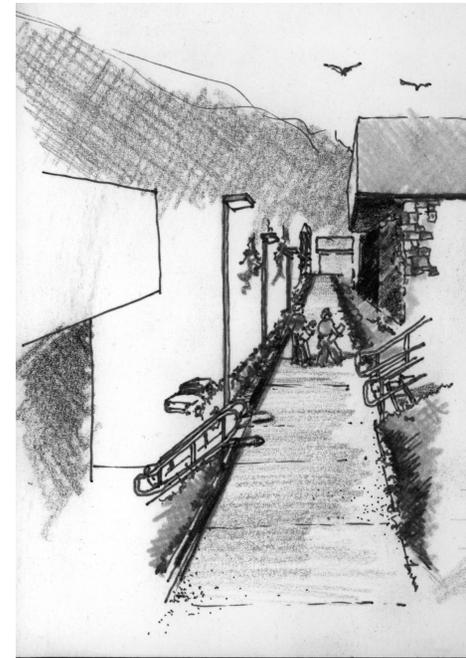


Figure 3-9 Sketch of the pathway between Carrs Grocery and the Post Office.

Criteria Assessment: High Priority

- **Safety: High.** The integrated walkway provides safe access through the heart of the most congested part of town and will redirect current unsafe pedestrian activities such as willy-nilly crossings along the Old Glenn, and trespassing behind McDonald's.
- **Linkages: High.** The walkway links key community public facilities such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, Commons Park, the public transit facility, the post office, the New Glenn Highway Bike Path, and

potentially a new library and community center. Additionally, the walkway links many businesses and parking lots.

- **Residents Served: High.** All residents of Eagle River will potentially use the improvements at one time or another, particularly if the new library is located as described in the Urban Design Study. This project is especially beneficial to the community's youth, who walk a good deal through the area at present. It would serve their movement from Bosco's Comic Store, to the Boys and Girls Clubs, to Commons Park, and to the Transit Facility.



Figure 3-10 At University Center, in Seattle, an older, traditional shopping mall was transformed into a vital community center. As seen above, quality materials and site furnishings can create a pleasant environment for pedestrians even within parking areas.

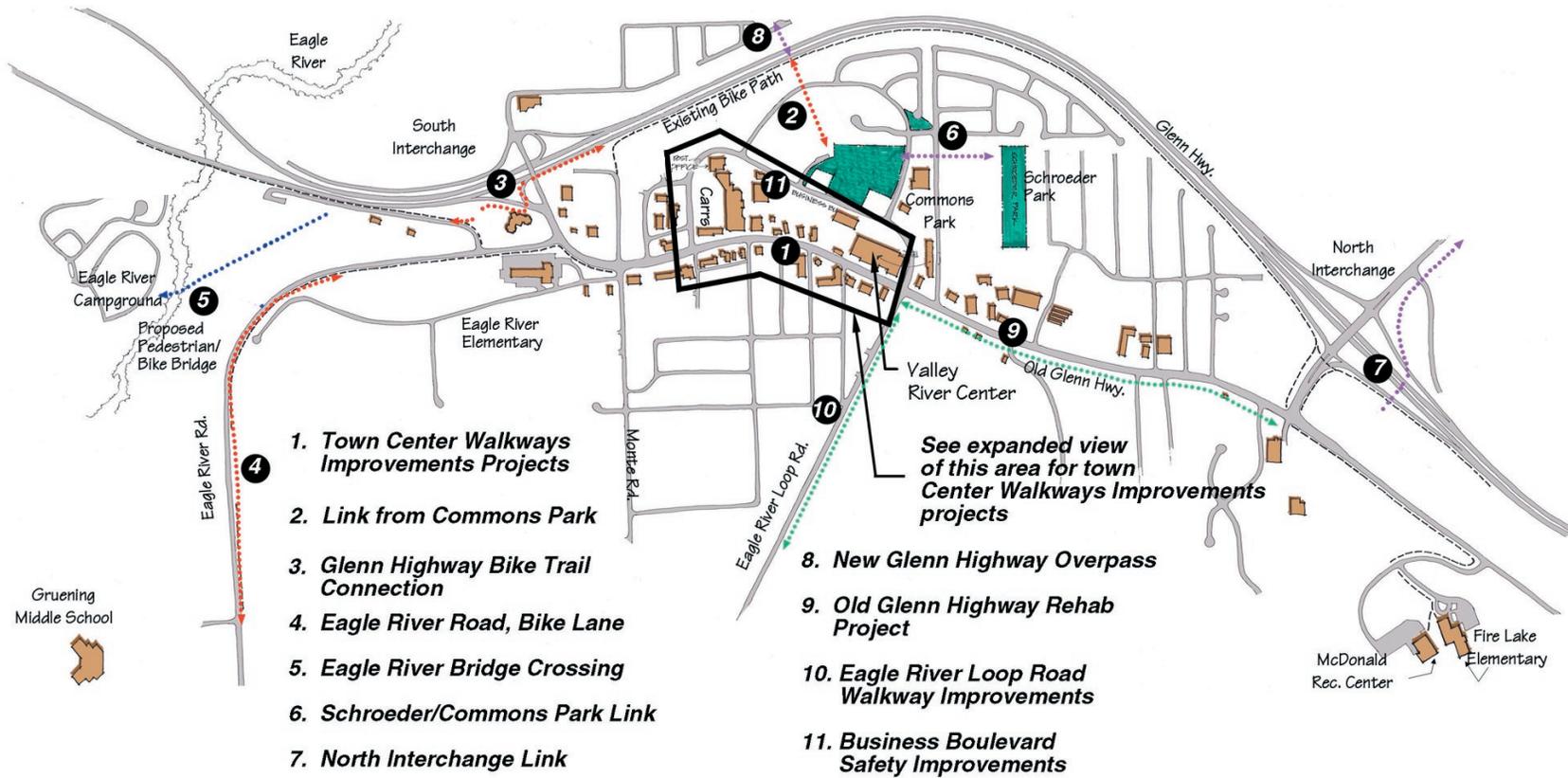
- **Value for Cost: High.** The overall cost for these improvements is high. It is emphasized that quality materials and a variety of site furnishings should be used. The good news is that projects can be

incrementally constructed and the entire work does not have to be done at once. Much of this project is already in place with walks completed at Valley River Center and at the theater complex.

Special expenses such as improved lighting, year-round maintenance, and pedestrian amenities could potentially be sponsored by area businesses. The high ratio of non-locally owned businesses will make this challenging. Currently, residents of both Eagle River and Anchorage do not think of the business district as a place to shop. Rather, the business district primarily provides convenience items and services. One member of this project's Citizen's Advisory Committee estimated that Eagle River residents have until recently spent eighty-five cents of every shopping dollar in Anchorage. Redirecting even a portion of this to local businesses could more than compensate for any investment in improving the downtown environment.

2. Glenn Highway Bike Trail Connection.

This improvement focuses on what is probably the most serious existing problem with the Eagle River trails system. The bike path along the New Glenn Highway leaves the Glenn Highway and enters town adjacent to VFW Road until it intersects with Artillery Road. At this point it crosses Artillery Road (the Old Glenn Highway). The bike path follows the Old Glenn Highway to Brooks Road (opposite Monte Road), where it turns left and follows Brooks Road until it reconnects to the New Glenn Highway. There are a couple of significant problems with this route. First, there is no directional signage at Brooks Road for people who do not know the way back to the New Glenn Highway Bike Path. First time users frequently



Eagle River Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation Plan Recommended Improvements



Figure 3-11 Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation Plan Recommended Improvements

get lost. Second, this convoluted route requires several at grade crossings of busy roads including Eagle River Road and the Old Glenn Highway. Alternatives for correcting the situation include:

- At a minimum, provide directional signage at Brooks Road to direct users back to the New Glenn Highway Bike Path. Brooks Road is not a very busy road and is suitable for cyclists. It would be beneficial to mark a bike path on the roadway to help reinforce the link. This would be the least expensive solution and should be done as an interim measure.
- Create the combination of an overpass / underpass at the off-ramp of the New Glenn Highway into Eagle River. This combination would immediately route cyclists back to the New Glenn Highway without bringing them into Eagle River. This alternative is a difficult and expensive piece of engineering that includes both a tunnel and an overpass. An upgrade to the interchange has been identified for future construction sometime between 2008 and 2015. An improved bicycle connection should be included in this project as an enhancement.

In the future, the primary connection between the New Glenn Highway Bike Path and the community center would be by way of the Commons Park link.

The estimated cost for the overpass / tunnel combination is roughly \$1.8 million. The immediate costs for signage and street markings would be less than \$10,000.



Figure 3-12 Signage is required to direct cyclists back to the New Glenn Highway Bike Trail at Brooks Road

Criteria Assessment: High Priority

- **Safety: High.** Cyclists are now required to cross both Eagle River Road and the Old Glenn Highway to make the link back to the New Glenn Highway Bike Path. The proposed improvements would eliminate any conflicts between bicycle/pedestrian traffic and vehicles at the South Interchange.
- **Links: High.** The South Interchange improvements would establish a continuous link along the Old Glenn Highway. Cyclists and pedestrians would be encouraged to enter town at the new link between Commons Park and the New Glenn Highway.
- **Residents Served: High.** The New Glenn Highway Bike Path attracts users from the entire region. Residents of Anchorage often ride to Eagle River for recreation. The bike path links Eagle River north to Chugiak and south to Anchorage.
- **Value for Cost: Medium.** This is an expensive

project. Riders can make the connection by way of the existing road system, even though it is not an optimal solution. The existing situation could be much improved by signage and pavement marking. The best alternative for dealing with the cost is to include the work with a proposed upgrade to the entire interchange.

3. *Commons Park to New Glenn Highway Link.*

This pathway link has consistently been given the highest priority by members of the community. The link would join the New Glenn Highway Bike Path with Commons Park. The link is dealt with in detail as part of the Commons Park Master Plan in section 4 of this report. The link will require either an easement or land acquisition.

Criteria Assessment: High Priority

- **Safety: High.** Pedestrians and cyclists are currently making their way to the New Glenn Highway Bike Path by the proposed route. This involves trespass and an unimproved path. The new connection will provide a direct route between the New Glenn Highway and the town center without having to cross major arterials.
- **Links: High.** This trail will provide a direct link from downtown to the New Glenn Highway.
- **Residents Served: High.** This link will serve a broader region than just Eagle River and will bring users from out of town into the heart of the community.
- **Value for Cost: High.** Although the cost for this link is relatively high, the value of the link is also high. A

large number of users are likely to be served by the link and it will significantly improve the safety of the connection between the town center and the New Glenn Highway Bike Path.

4. *Eagle River Road Bike Lane from Artillery Road to Eagle River Loop Road.*

The bike path along Eagle River Road crosses numerous driveways and often changes grade significantly before or after driveway intersections. Members of the community have noted that the trail isn't bad for pedestrians, but could be made safer for cyclists. There are no current plans to upgrade or improve the trail. The trail is important because many long-distance riders from Anchorage travel up Eagle River Road to the Eagle River Nature Center. It also provides a key link to the largest concentration of residential development in Eagle River. The pathway provides an important link to Gruening Middle School and Walmart at the intersection of Eagle River Road and Eagle River Loop Road.

Even if the sudden grade changes are corrected, the frequent crossings of driveways and side streets may be hazardous to bicycle users. The Area-Wide Trails Plan calls for a new trail on the south side of Eagle River Road. This would be an improvement because there are far fewer driveways to cross. A safer alternative and the one preferred by most bicycle commuters is a designated bike lane. This would be included on the shoulder of Eagle River Road. As Eagle River Road proceeds east into the Chugach Mountains, the terrain becomes much steeper. This increases the difficulty of incorporating a separated bike trail. The section of road identified for this project is between Artillery Road and Eagle River Loop Road. It is within this area that driveway

crossings are most frequent. Additionally, the State Department of Transportation has programmed construction for upgrading Eagle River Road from mile post 5 to the Nature Center. It is anticipated that this will include trails.

- Add a marked eight-foot bike lane on the shoulder of Eagle River Road. This is probably the simplest and most desirable solution. Most regular cyclists feel safer riding on a marked bike lane than on a separated bike path and the lane reduces potential conflicts with automobiles because vehicles coming out of driveways must stop to look for oncoming traffic. An estimated cost for the addition of a bike lane on the shoulder of Eagle River Road from Artillery Road to Eagle River Loop Road is \$250,000.

Criteria Assessment: High Priority

- **Safety: High.** The existing condition of the bike trail adjacent to Eagle River Road does not meet current Municipal standards for bike trails and is not very safe for cyclists. A bike lane on Eagle River Road would significantly improve the situation.
- **Links: Medium.** The existing bike path already provides the necessary link, even though it may not be optimal. The improved linkage would be for the commuter and long-distance cyclist.
- **Residents Served: High.** The Eagle River Valley has the highest residential concentration in Eagle River. An improved bike lane would serve a large proportion of residents.
- **Value for Cost: High.** The cost of this project would be low compared to establishing a new bike path or

completely rebuilding the existing bike path. Safety improvements would be significant and the ride would be much smoother for cyclists.

B. Medium-Priority Projects

5. Eagle River Crossing.

This link would connect the Eagle River Campground directly with the town. It would also provide linkages to the high school and residential development. This has long been a desired connection because the campground receives frequent summer use and the New Glenn Highway Bike Path, does not provide direct access. It is believed that the community would benefit economically from an improved link as campground users could directly access local businesses.

- **Old Glenn Highway Link** The Old Glenn Highway bridge abutments still exist, not far from the Eagle River Campground. It may be possible to construct a direct link across Eagle River using these existing abutments. The trail would connect to VFW Road and proceed into town.

The cost of this improvement could vary dramatically. If the abutments are in good shape the cost could be as low as \$500,000. If abutments have to be built or improved upon the cost for the direct route could be as much as \$1.5 million.

Criteria Assessment: Medium Priority

- **Safety: Medium.** The existing link is not dangerous, but it is long and indirect. The existing link encourages the user to find shortcuts.

- **Links: High.** There is currently no good link between Eagle River and the campground. The link would serve the community well.
- **Residents Served: Medium.** Although local Eagle River residents would likely use the crossing at times, the primary users would be campground visitors. This is a relatively narrow user group. Over time, though, as housing increases south of the river and the need for high school student access occurs, demand for this link may increase significantly.
- **Value for the Cost: Medium.** If the existing bridge abutments could be used, the value would be somewhat higher. In either case this is an expensive project for a specifically targeted user group in the near term.

6. Commons Park to Schroeder Park Link.

Public parks and open space benefit significantly when strong pedestrian linkages or greenbelts can be established between them. Commons Park and Schroeder Park are good candidates for such a link. Existing roadways between the parks are residential in nature and not congested. The two parks are relatively close together and there are no major arterials between them. The link could be made by establishing a bike lane on existing roads or by improving walkways adjacent to the roads. This link will likely become more significant as the importance of Commons Park increases. Additionally, Schroeder Park would likely have greater visibility and attract broader use within the community.

The cost for improving this link is estimated at \$150,000.

Criteria Assessment: Medium Priority

- **Safety: Low.** Establishing the link between the parks is not a safety issue. The existing residential roads do not pose a safety hazard.
- **Links: High.** The real merit of this project is establishing a link and a relationship between the two parks
- **Residents Served: Medium.** This link would serve primarily a local population, but residential development in the area is significant and the route would likely be used by local residents on a regular basis.
- **Value for Cost: Medium.** This would not be a particularly expensive project to implement, but it is not a pressing need for the community. As such, it has been given a neutral or medium rating.

C. Low-Priority Projects

7. North Interchange Bike Path Link.

This link would provide a safe means of crossing the New Glenn Highway at the North Interchange by means of a tunnel. There is little immediate need for this connection; however, the plans for a major subdivision will increase the importance of this connection.

- Create a link from the New Glenn Highway Bike Path just north of the North Interchange. The link would be made by a tunnel. Although the length of the tunnel would be significant, the solution offers the simplest

means of meeting the accessibility requirements for the dollars spent. With a direct link to the New Glenn Highway Bike Path, a tunnel would offer the shortest route to the west side. It would also significantly reduce potential automobile conflicts.

The cost for a tunnel link under the New Glenn Highway would be approximately \$500,000.

Criteria Assessment: Low Priority

- **Safety: Medium.** The connection can currently be made by existing roadways without a great deal of safety hazard. The North Interchange will become a much busier place in the years to come and safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists will increase.
- **Links: Medium.** This is not yet an important link, but will likely become so in the future.
- **Residents Served: Low.** Few residents would currently be served by this link.
- **Value for the Cost: Low.** This would be a significant project. At some future point, when Eagle River has expanded across the New Glenn Highway at the North Interchange, the value of the project will justify the cost. Under the current conditions, however there would not be enough use to warrant the expense.

8. Grade-Separated Crossing of the New Glenn Highway.

An existing footpath that leads to the New Glenn Highway indicates pedestrian traffic between the subdivision on the west side of the New Glenn

Highway and the Central Business District of Eagle River. Although sight distances are good in the area, the footpath indicates that pedestrians are running across the New Glenn Highway, rather than using the interchanges. This activity will likely increase with the completion of a pedestrian link from Business Boulevard to the New Glenn Highway. Although the activity is dangerous, this project is currently given a low priority due to the high expense of building a grade-separated crossing to serve a limited group of users. When the Powder Ridge Subdivision is completed, demand may increase significantly for a pedestrian crossing of the New Glenn Highway between the two interchanges. This is an issue that should be reexamined in five to ten years.

- Construct a grade-separated crossing for pedestrians only. This would be constructed just south of the right-of-way intersection with the Fort Richardson Military Reservation and would link the subdivision on the west side of the New Glenn Highway with the bikepath.
- Construct a new overpass for vehicles and pedestrians. The new overpass would be an extension of Farm Avenue and would cross to the west side of the New Glenn Highway. It would provide a link to proposed subdivisions in the area west of the North Interchange. There are a couple of stumbling blocks with this proposal. The property on the west side of the New Glenn Highway, opposite the terminus of Farm Road is on the Fort Richardson Military Reservation. A second obstacle is the expense. The construction of such an overpass will not be justifiable until there is clear demand due to development on the west side of the Old Glenn Highway.

The cost for a grade-separated pedestrian crossing of the Old Glenn Highway would be a minimum of \$1.75 million and could be as much as \$2.5 million. The cost of a vehicular overpass could be as much as \$15 million.

Criteria Assessment: Low Priority

- **Safety: High.** The current, year-round situation of people running across the Glenn Highway is a clear and significant danger.
- **Links: Medium.** The link between the east and west side of the Old Glenn Highway would be useful in support of the existing subdivision. Much of the land, however, immediately adjacent to the right of way on the west side of the road is military reservation land. A link to this land is of no value. When the Powder Ridge Subdivision is completed, the demand for a crossing will increase significantly for both pedestrians and vehicles.
- **Residents Served: Low.** Although there is an indication that pedestrians make this crossing, based on an existing pathway and tracks in the snow, actual crossing was never observed. The total residential population of the existing subdivision is relatively small.
- **Value For Cost: Low.** Due to the very low number of residents that would use this trail and the very high cost, the value has been rated low at the present time. If, in the future a link is made between the Powder Ridge Subdivision and the existing subdivision near the South Interchange on the west side of the New Glenn Highway, a new overpass from the terminus of Farm Avenue to the new road on the west side would serve the community well.

D. Programmed Projects

This category includes three projects which will significantly influence the overall Bicycle/ Pedestrian Plan. All three have either been recently constructed or are in the design stage with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

9. *Old Glenn Highway Rehabilitation Project.*

Old Glenn Highway Pavement Rehabilitation, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities. This project is in the early stages of design. The primary goal of the urban portion of this project is to repave the Old Glenn Highway from the South Interchange to the North Interchange. It will deal with drainage problems, lane striping or widening at key intersections, and include some pedestrian amenities and landscaping. No right-of-way acquisition is planned for this project. Construction is anticipated in 2005.

10. *The Eagle River Loop Road Path.*

Eagle River Loop Reconstruction, Old Glenn Highway to Eagle River Road, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities. This long-range project is in the pre-design stage and will widen Eagle River Loop Road as well as provide pedestrian walkways/trails from the Old Glenn Highway to Eagle River Road. Right-of-way acquisition is anticipated for this project. Construction is slated somewhere between 2008 and 2015.

11. Business Boulevard Safety Improvements.

Business Boulevard Safety Improvements, Municipality of Anchorage. This project has recently been completed. The project includes the placement of center medians, right-of-way acquisition for trails and walkways, landscaping, and the placement of site furnishings. Site furnishings include banner poles and decorative fences.

End of Section