

Cycling The Villages



*A Vision of
Safe and Enjoyable
Bicycling for Residents
of The Villages, Florida*

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I. Preface

The Villages Recreation Department is pleased to present ***A Vision for Safe and Enjoyable Bicycling in The Villages, Florida***, prepared by the Bike Friendly Advocacy Group, one of the Resident Lifestyle Groups (RLGs) in The Villages.

When envisioning what would become the largest retirement community in the world. The Villages' creators knew that golf carts, biking and walking would be important transportation alternatives and so purpose-built them into the community's infrastructure from the beginning. Thus, The Villages has been constructed with cycling facilities that far exceed those found in most other communities.

Unlike the bicycle planning documents for other communities -- which have to focus on the engineering and construction of numerous facilities and structures to be added to their transportation network -- *Cycling The Villages* incorporates our ideal existing infrastructure as the foundation for better cycling. Starting with our superior engineering that is already in place, it layers a variety of biking improvement programs organized around the League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Community criteria of Education, Enforcement, Encouragement and Evaluation.

The Villages Recreation Department is accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), and *Cycling The Villages* supports the Department's mission. We believe that it will provide direction for improving cycling in our community. The recommendations it makes offer a sound basis for planning and implementation of activities for cycling safety and enjoyment today, tomorrow and into the future.

John Rohan, Director
Recreation Department
The Villages, Florida

II. Introduction

Cycling The Villages was prepared by the Bicycle Friendly Advocacy Group (“Group”). The Group comprises residents who work as volunteer advocates for the highly active cycling community, along with staff of The Villages Community Development Districts’ Recreation Department. The Group is one of more than 2500 Resident Lifestyle Groups (RLGs) in The Villages.

In 2014, the Group applied to the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) for The Villages to be recognized as a Bike Friendly Community and received a Silver award. In submitting the application, the original intent was to simply describe The Villages’ wonderful environment for cycling. However, the self-examination required to complete the application and the feedback received from LAB led the Group to realize much remained to be done to make cycling in The Villages as safe and enjoyable as possible. Efforts proposed by the Group are presented in *Cycling The Villages*.

The Villages is among the fastest growing places in the United States and - at 115,000+ population and 40 square miles - the largest retirement community in the world. The Villages was master planned and developed with a system of multi-modal paths and golf cart/bike lanes as part of an unusually wide array of amenities that most cities and counties would find impossible to match with tax dollars or grant programs. In recognizing The Villages as a Silver Bicycle Friendly community, the LAB understood The Villages’ unusual status and importance as an incubator for developing bicycling facilities and programs for seniors as the Baby Boom generation continues to retire in record numbers.

Cycling The Villages describes existing conditions for cycling in The Villages, analyzes needs and lists recommended actions for future improvements. It is organized around LAB’s “5-E’s” criteria: Engineering, Education, Enforcement, Encouragement and Evaluation. Given the unique and exemplary physical infrastructure of The Villages, *Cycling The Villages* focuses primarily on the soft areas of education, enforcement and encouragement. Goals for each of the 5- E’s are:

Goal: Engineering

Maintain and enhance bicycle facilities in The Villages to continue to meet or exceed accepted standards and guidelines.

Goal: Education

Educate cyclists, motorists, golf cart operators, pedestrians and other users of the roads and multi-modal paths so everyone knows the laws and behaviors that will make The Villages safe and enjoyable for cycling.

Goal: Enforcement

Work with the FHP and all law enforcement entities in the three counties and three municipalities in which The Villages is located for effective enforcement of traffic laws, based on the known and predicted causes of collisions between bicycles and other vehicles.

Goal: Encouragement

Encourage increased ridership among all levels of cyclists, including new cyclists and those who have not ridden for many years. Enhance awareness of cycling through charity rides, bike expos and other organized events, and communicate the health, fitness and social benefits of cycling at any age.

Goal: Evaluation

Evaluate progress toward the goals of *Cycling The Villages* on a regular basis and advocate for cyclists' needs as the area continues to grow in the future.



Figure 1: Bike club ride start

III. Description of The Villages

The Villages is a census-designated place (CDP) located primarily in Sumter County, Florida. It shares its name with a broader master planned active adult community that occupies portions of Sumter, Lake and Marion counties, located in central Florida approximately 45 miles northwest of Orlando and 20 miles south of Ocala. The Villages covers 40 square miles and is surrounded by major roads: SR27/SR 441 to the east, US301 to the west, CR42 to the north, and SR44 to the south. Buena Vista Boulevard and Morse Boulevard serve as major north-south routes within The Villages, and CR466 and CR466A cross The Villages from east to west. The Villages consistently ranks as one of the highest growth areas in the United States. It has more than doubled in size since 2010, with a 2016 population of about 115,000 people.

History: In the 1960s Harold Schwartz, a Michigan businessman, began selling land tracts via mail order in the Lake County portion of what is now The Villages. He and his business partner, Al Tarrson, closed the mail order aspect of the business due to a 1968 Federal law banning sales of real estate by mail order. In the early 1970s Schwartz and Tarrson began development of a manufactured home park, Orange Blossom Gardens, in the northwestern corner of Lake County. By the early 1980s, they had sold only 400 units. In an attempt to expand the business, Schwartz bought out Tarrson's interest and brought his son, H. Gary Morse, on board in 1983.

Schwartz and Morse noted that successful retirement communities offered numerous amenities to the residents as well as convenient nearby commercial development. They decided that golf courses would be ideal amenities since there was a huge demand from golf lovers all over North America, abundant available land, sandy alkaline soil suited for growing grass and plentiful rainfall. Thus was born the “golf cart community,” master planned so that residents could drive a golf cart directly from their homes to any of the golf courses or any other destination in the community. This was the genesis of a huge network of roads and trails to serve golf carts, which also happen to be ideal for cycling.



Figure 2: Golf Cart Community sign

Home sales improved dramatically as the golf courses and other amenities were built, making it possible for the developers to buy large tracts of land in nearby Sumter and Marion counties. The Villages' master plan organizes the homes and amenities into "villages" which range in size from 50 to 1500 homes, clustered around the golf courses, ponds and open space preserves. In 1985, the overall development name was officially changed to "The Villages." The development is still operated under the guidance of descendants of Schwartz and Morse (Harold Schwartz died in 2003 and H. Gary Morse died in 2014).

Demographics: As of 2016, the average age of residents of The Villages is 62. About 80 percent of residents are married couples, while about 20 percent are single. The median income for households is about \$98,000. Home prices range from \$100,000 to \$2,000,000, with the majority of homes currently priced between \$200,000 and \$350,000.

Age Restriction: To qualify for an exception to the Housing for Older Persons Act prohibitions against discrimination, at least 80 percent of the homes within The Villages must have at least one person 55 years of age or older residing in the home. Persons under the age of 19 years are not permitted to reside within The Villages for more than 30 days per year. Four neighborhoods within and near The Villages are designated as "family" neighborhoods which are not subject to age restriction, but residents of those neighborhoods do not have access to the recreation centers, executive golf courses, pools and other amenities that require a resident ID card.

Government: The Villages is managed by 15 Community Development Districts (CDDs) that share a District Manager. CDDs are a form of special purpose local government available under Florida law and used by about 225 communities. Law enforcement, taxation and infrastructure maintenance occur through the three counties and three municipalities in which The Villages resides.

Covenants: A Declaration of Restrictions is created for each neighborhood, which regulates design and operational aspects such as landscaping, repairs and maintenance, and placement of satellite dishes, ornaments and hedges. An Architectural Review Committee (ARC) controls any exterior changes to residential properties within The Villages. The ARC, composed of Villages residents, reviews and approves proposed alterations or modifications. Committee members serve for three years and are selected by the sitting committee.

Traffic and Crime: The Villages is a relatively low-density development so its internal roads tend not to have high volumes of traffic. Various traffic calming measures such as traffic circles and semaphore gates help to control traffic speeds; for more detail see Section V, Existing Conditions. At the gates, residents have pass cards while non-residents push a button or are waved through and are photographed with live cameras.

The Villages has relatively low crime rates. Residents report unusual activities to law enforcement officials via 911. The Villages Community Watch service provides active

surveillance, passing on the roads of all of the 80+ neighborhoods (“Villages”) several times each day.

Golf Courses: The Villages has 48 golf courses with 600+ holes. Golf on the 36 9-hole executive courses is “free,” included in the monthly amenity fees. Golf on the twelve championship courses requires a fee. Each championship course has an associated Country Club with clubhouse, pro shop and restaurant. Residents of any village may use any of the golf courses and country club facilities.

Recreation Centers and Swimming Pools: The Villages operates 83 recreation centers and 82 swimming pools. There are three classes of centers:

Neighborhood Centers (48) - these centers offer adult-only pools as well as outdoor bocce, horseshoe, and shuffleboard courts.

Village Centers (25) - these centers offer family pools, indoor facilities with billiard rooms, meeting rooms and full kitchens, plus outdoor bocce, horseshoe, shuffleboard, tennis and pickle ball courts.

Regional Centers (10) - these centers offer resident-only sports pools (except for Paradise Recreation Center, which has a family pool), large meeting rooms including at least one with a stage for theatrical and musical productions, and many of the same features as the village centers. Five of the Regional Centers include a fitness center for which a membership must be purchased.

Other Amenities: The Villages operates 11 parks, dog parks and fitness trails which are separate from the recreation centers. The Villages also operates three softball complexes with 10 fields, The Villages Polo Stadium, two archery ranges, an air gun range and a woodworking shop. The Villages is the center for pickle ball in the U.S. with 174 courts.

The Villages Recreation Master Plan: This plan reproduced in Figure 4 is available in a very large PDF file in Appendix 1, where it can be viewed at any scale. It is an extremely detailed plan that shows the locations of all of the amenities listed above (golf courses, recreation centers, swimming pools and so forth). It also shows the multi-modal paths, pedestrian sidewalks, tunnels and bridges as well as the scenic features such as lakes, ponds and wildlife preserves.

Clubs and Organizations: In addition to the bicycle clubs listed in Appendix 2, The Villages has approximately 2500 clubs and organizations covering virtually every imaginable interest as well as geographic area clubs, support groups, alumni groups and other organizations. Club notices are published each week in the 60+ page *Recreation News* which is distributed in the *Daily Sun* (newspaper) and at each of the recreation centers.

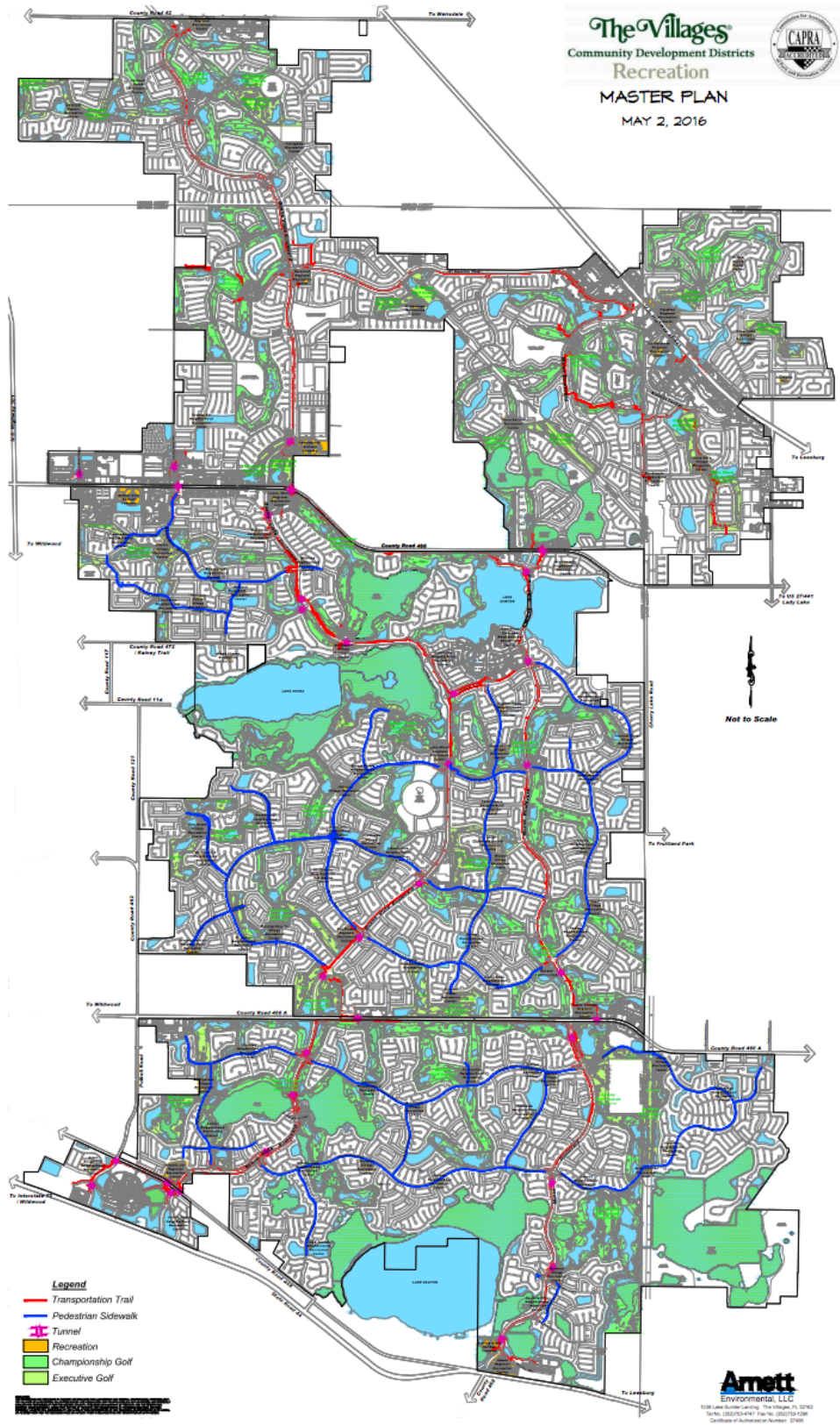


Figure 3 The Villages Recreation Master Plan

Live Entertainment at the Town Squares: Bands, singers and musical ensembles appear from 5PM to 9PM every night of the year (except Christmas) at the three town squares: Market Square at Lake Sumter Landing, Spanish Springs Town Square and Brownwood's Paddock Square.

Theaters: Each of the three town squares has a multi-screen movie theater complex. The Sharon Performing Arts Center at Spanish Springs, an 1100-seat theater that opened in 2015, draws a wide variety of performers and shows, as does the older 832-seat Savannah Center theater.

Media: The Villages' developers established their own newspaper, radio station and cable TV station which have been or are being transitioned to other ownership and operation:

- * *The Villages Daily Sun* (newspaper)
- * The Villages News Network (VNN), aired on Comcast cable network
- * Radio station WVLG AM 640 (a Fox News Radio affiliate).

Other local media include:

Villages-News.com, an online newspaper

POA Newsletter, paper edition delivered monthly; also available online

Various other informational websites or forums

Regional media include television channels from the Orlando and Tampa markets, radio stations from the Orlando and Gainesville/Ocala markets, and area newspapers such as the Orlando Sentinel, the Tampa Tribune, the Tampa Bay Times, the Leesburg Daily Commercial and the Ocala Star-Banner.

Transportation: Sumter County Transit operates The Villages shuttle, which provides various weekday loops through the Villages. The Villages sales office offers a free trolley-style bus tour of the community leaving from the sales and information centers.

There are various options available for travel between Orlando International Airport and The Villages, including a shuttle service provided by The Villages Transportation. Travel between The Villages and The Orlando International Airport takes approximately 90 minutes.

Amtrak serves The Villages by connecting bus to Jacksonville and Lakeland.

Political Districts: The Villages is in Florida's 11th congressional district, Florida Senate District 20 and Florida House of Representatives District 42. The portion of The Villages in Lake County is within Lake County District 1, and the portion in Marion County is within Marion County District 3. Areas of The Villages in Sumter County are divided between Sumter County District 1, which includes areas east of Morse Boulevard, and Sumter County District 3, which includes areas west of Morse Boulevard.

Schools: The Villages Charter School is a PK-12 charter school in unincorporated Sumter County. Children are eligible to attend the charter school only if one or both of their parents work directly for The Villages or its subcontractors, or for a business that leases from The Villages.

The following school listings are primarily for tax base purposes, as the Villages does not allow full-time residents under age 19 except in the family neighborhoods of Bison Valley, Spring Arbor, Oak Meadows and Oxford Oaks. The portion of The Villages located in Marion County is zoned to Lake Weir High School of the Marion County School District. The portion of The Villages located in Sumter County is zoned to Wildwood Middle High School of Sumter District Schools. The portion of The Villages located in Lake County is zoned to Leesburg High School of the Lake County Schools.

Adult Education: Sumter District Schools operates the Sumter County Adult Community Education Center. For residents of Lake and Sumter counties, Lake-Sumter State College provides adult education at the South Lake Campus in Clermont, the Leesburg Campus in Leesburg and the Sumter Campus. The College of Central Florida serves residents of Marion County, operating the Ocala Campus and the Hampton Center in Ocala.

Future Expansion of The Villages: A new section of The Villages, which is not contiguous with the existing development, is planned and under construction about four miles south of The Villages' current southern boundary (SR 44), centered around the Florida Turnpike. The first section, the "Village of Fenney," is projected to include 4,600 homes and will open in 2017. A total of about 14,000 homes on 8000 acres is planned. Cycling facilities and activities for this new area of The Villages are not addressed in this document but will be included in future updates. The roads that currently connect with the proposed future development area, US 301 and CR 468, are addressed in the section on Major External Roads, pages 35-36.

IV. Overview of the Process

Efforts to provide safe and enjoyable cycling in The Villages began many years ago with the formation of The Village Bicycle Club in 2002, the Sumter Landing Bicycle Club in 2005 and the PANTHERS Tandem Club in 2009 (see Appendix 2 for descriptions of each of the clubs). Officers and other leaders of these clubs now coordinate their efforts to improve cycling in The Villages through the Bike Friendly Advocacy Group.

A. Vision

The vision of the Bike Friendly Advocacy Group (“Group”) is enjoyable, convenient and safe bicycle riding in The Villages, contributing to better health and social relationships.

The Group assesses progress toward its vision through growth in the number of residents participating in cycling activities, reduction in the number of bicycle related crashes and injuries and progress toward a Gold Bike Friendly Community award when judged against the national standards from the League of American Bicyclists (LAB).

B. Bike Friendly Advocacy Group History

The Group evolved out of the desire of bicyclists in The Villages for resident involvement in cooperatively enhancing the generally good safety and security residents enjoy during their bicycling activities. These activities include bike club sponsored group rides, charity events and individual rides throughout The Villages and the surrounding area.

The Villages is a community comprising mainly retired senior citizens whose average age is 62. They are very active as seniors, perhaps more active than most senior communities in the USA. The Villages says that it is “America’s Healthiest Home Town,” which reflects the lifestyle of

active senior living and outstanding health care. With 48 golf courses, 82 swimming pools and 83 recreation centers, live music and dancing in three town centers virtually 365 days per year, and 2,500 social and service clubs there is every reason to be active and none to be lonely.

Despite all the good things about retirement, residents do have issues such as being frailer than when they were younger. If hurt, it takes longer to heal. This is a fact of life. As beneficial as bicycling is for our health, falling off a bike can be disastrous. With safety and security in mind, a number of bicyclists convened to discuss a formal process to enhance the bicycling experience in The Villages.

Officers and other leaders from the bike clubs gathered to discuss a way ahead to enhance bicycle safety. They decided to approach the Director of The Villages Recreation Department to get guidance and buy-in for their goals. He proved to be a receptive audience but pointed out that the decision making process in The Villages is made complex by the number of players: the developer, the 15 Villages Community Development Districts (CDDs), the involved agencies of three counties and three municipalities, and the residents who may support or oppose a proposition.

Each of the three counties and three municipalities has developed its own comprehensive master plan. The Group reviewed these plans and found that the Villages complies with them as they pertain to residents within the boundaries of these governing bodies. These plans are summarized in Appendix 3.

The bottom line is that getting to “Yes” on any matter requires a lot of coordination, and there is no single entity to represent the interests of the bicycling community. The result was the creation of The Villages Bike Friendly Advocacy Group (“Group”). The Group provides advocacy on bicycle issues and advice as needed. It meets three times each year to discuss bicycle issues. It publishes the minutes of its meetings. Once established, The Group needed a message that articulated what it wanted to accomplish in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

C. League of American Bicyclists (LAB) Bicycle Friendly Community Program

Enter the League of American Bicyclists (LAB). Most of the Group knew of the LAB, and many were individual members. All of the bike clubs had group memberships. The LAB provides a forum to vet bicycle issues, and provides medical insurance for crashes occurring on sanctioned group rides. The LAB also provided a model for enhancing safety, security and enjoyment, through their program to recognize Bicycle Friendly Communities.

The LAB describes its model in terms of the 5-Es, which are:

Engineering, or infrastructure
Education, or riding skills and discipline
Enforcement, or the law and rules of the road
Encouragement, or engagement and inclusion, and
Evaluation, or inward looking for continuous improvement.

The Bicycle Friendly Community program provided a way for the Group to evaluate The Villages to see how it compares with other communities across the USA. The LAB awarded The Villages Silver status as the first retirement community to receive Bicycle Friendly Community recognition. Today, the Group continues its work as volunteers as it focuses on achieving its vision through the 5-Es Model.



Figure 4: Presentation of the LAB Silver Award in 2014

D. Progress toward Gold

The LAB Bicycle Friendly Community award is valid for four years. Since The Villages received its Silver award in 2014, a new application will be due in late 2017. The Group has been anticipating this process and is working to meet the criteria for a Gold award in 2018. Many of the steps outlined in *Cycling The Villages* respond to the feedback received by The Villages from LAB (see Appendix 4).

The Group meets three times a year and has constructed a timeline to assure that the actions expected by LAB are documented and that each of the individuals performing specific tasks is receiving the support he or she needs.

V. Existing Conditions and Guidelines for Bicycles

A. Bicycle Infrastructure

The network of roads and multi-modal paths in The Villages provides cycling conditions that are among the most favorable in North America. Planned, engineered and built by the developer over a period of more than 20 years, with more than 400 miles of roads suitable for cycling and 42 miles of paved multi-modal paths connect all of the residences, businesses and amenities within the community. This is in stark contrast to most communities, which often require significant infrastructure changes to accommodate safe and convenient bicycling.

This section describes the existing conditions of each component of The Villages' road and multi-modal path network and offers guidelines for their use by cyclists. The guidelines are based on Florida traffic laws, established procedures in The Villages and safety practices recommended by the bicycle clubs. (A summary of the cycling guidelines is provided in Appendix 5).

B. Categories of Roads

The Villages was planned with a time-tested hierarchy of roads used in many other master-planned communities:

- **Arterial Roads** are major through roads that are expected to carry large volumes of traffic.
- **Collector Roads** collect traffic from the local roads and carry it to and from arterial roads or to other collector roads or local roads.
- **Local Roads** serve the residential neighborhoods and other areas that have low traffic volume and little or no through traffic.

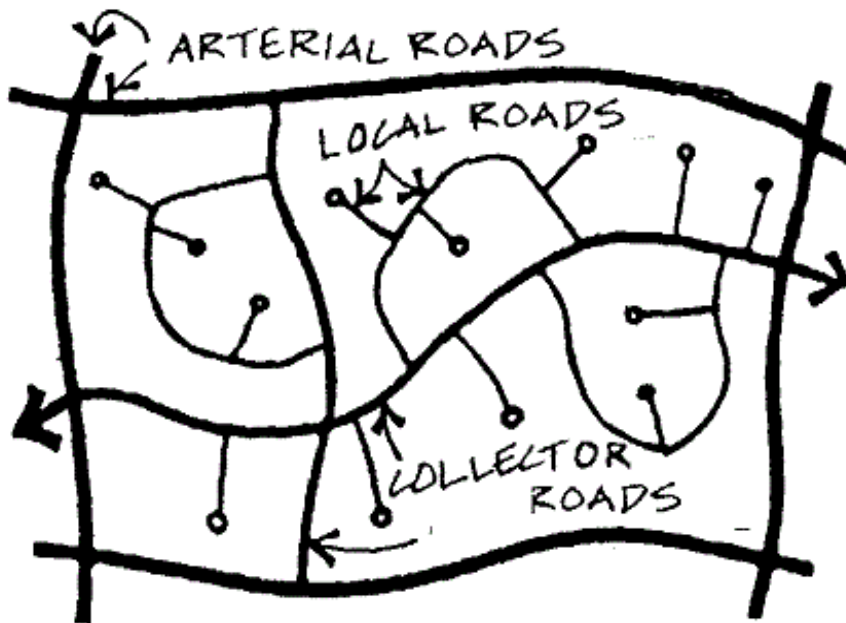


Figure 5: Road Categories Diagram

Easy Summary of Road Categories in The Villages: generally,

- If it has a separate paved multi-modal path next to it, it is an **Arterial Road**.
- If it has cart/bike lanes on each side, it is a **Collector Road**.
- If it has neither, it is a **Local Road**

C. Arterial Roads

The arterial roads in The Villages typically have four vehicle lanes, landscaped medians and parallel multi-modal paths (see Section F below). Arterial roads are designed to collect and carry the highest volumes of traffic and to move that traffic efficiently, generally from north to south or east to west. Most of The Villages' arterial roads have speed limits of 35 mph, with the exception of CR466 and CR466A, which have speed limits of 45 mph.



Figure 6: Arterial Road example: Morse Boulevard (35 mph), with 4 vehicle lanes, center island and parallel multi-modal path

- 35 mph Arterial Roads

Buena Vista Boulevard from CR42 to CR44 (12.6 miles)

Morse Boulevard from CR466 to CR44 (7.2 Miles)

Note: north of CR466, Morse Boulevard is a Collector Road

El Camino (2 miles, between Buena Vista Boulevard and Morse Boulevard)

Stillwater Trail (0.7 miles between Buena Vista and Morse Boulevard)

Note: east of Morse Boulevard, Stillwater Trail is a Collector Road

Dimensions: Two vehicular lanes in each direction, each lane typically 11' wide, separated by a landscaped median that is typically 20' wide.

Intersections and Entrances: Intersections on Morse Boulevard and Buena Vista Boulevard are primarily traffic circles, with a few signalized intersections.. There are very few other entrances/exits on these roads (i.e., fire station, treatment plant, recreation center) and no residential driveways. El Camino has two signalized intersections and several stop-sign-controlled intersections, particularly near Morse Boulevard where it serves the hospital and surrounding medical facilities. Stillwater Trail has traffic circles at Buena Vista Boulevard, Canal Street and Morse Boulevard, and a pedestrian crossing near Canal Street.

Speed Limits: Typically 35 mph, slowing to 20 mph at traffic circles and signals.

Guidelines for Bicycles: These 35 mph roads are suitable for experienced cyclists or groups of cyclists with an experienced leader. Novice cyclists and slow cyclists are advised to use the multi-modal paths. The vehicular lanes are not wide enough for both a car and a bicycle to occupy a lane simultaneously; safe passing requires the passing vehicle to move to the left when it is clear to do so.



Figure 7: Arterial Road example: CR466 (45 mph), with 4 vehicle lanes, center island and parallel multi-modal path

- 45 mph Arterial Roads

CR466 (The Villages section 4 miles)

CR466A (The Villages section 5.2 miles)

The county roads CR466 and CR466A extend across the width of The Villages from east to west and are considered arterial roads for the portion that serves The Villages. However, they continue outside of The Villages in both directions. They carry considerable volumes of traffic to non-Villages destinations and have higher speed limits than The Villages' other arterial roads.

Dimensions: Two vehicular lanes in each direction, typically 11' wide, separated by a landscaped median that is typically 20' wide. There are frequent additional turn lanes. Multi-modal paths parallel CR466 and CR466A only between Morse Boulevard and Buena Vista Boulevard; beyond these points, multi-modal path traffic moves north or south along the multi-modal paths routes (consult The Villages App; see Appendix 6).

Intersections and Entrances: Most of the intersections on CR466 and CR466A are signalized; however, some are controlled by stop signs only. There are frequent entrances with right-turn-only traffic serving businesses and shopping areas, and more are expected as vacant parcels are built out.

Speed Limits: Typically 45 mph or as posted. There is a posted School Zone on CR466 from CR101 to CR103.



Figure 8: CR466 west of Buena Vista Boulevard, with congestion from turn lanes, multiple entrances and intersections, not suitable for bicycles

Guidelines for Bicycles: CR466 from Morse Boulevard to US301 is not suitable for bicycles; the heavy traffic, narrow lanes and frequent turning vehicles make it unsafe for cyclists of any level of experience. Use of the multi-modal paths and parallel or crossing roads is strongly recommended. Experienced cyclists may feel comfortable on CR466A and the portion of CR466 east of Morse Blvd, but this is likely to change as vacant parcels are developed. Novice cyclists and slow cyclists are advised to avoid both of these roads; use the multi-modal path or use The Villages App (see Appendix 6) to find alternate routes.

D. Collector Roads

The collector roads collect traffic from the local roads and carry it to and from arterial roads or to other collector roads or local roads. Collector roads in The Villages have two lanes for vehicular traffic and a golf cart/bike lane on each side. Lanes are separated with painted

stripes.

Dimensions: One lane in each direction, typically 11' wide, plus one cart/bike lane on each side, typically 7' wide.



Figure 9: Typical Collector Road, with two regular vehicle lanes and two cart/bike lanes

Intersections and Entrances: Cross streets on collector roads may have a signal or 4-way or 2-way stop signs. Cart/bike lanes end before each intersection, with painted markings indicating that all traffic is to merge into the vehicular lane. Left turn lanes are provided at some intersections.

Collector Roads have frequent entrances/exits into neighborhood pools, recreation centers and so forth, but typically have no residential driveways. (*Note: A few collector roads north of CR466 have some residential driveways; i.e., Southern Trace, Talley Ridge Circle*).

Speed Limits: Typically 25 mph or 30 mph, as posted



Figure 10: Typical merge section on Collector Road; cart/bike lane ends

Guidelines for Bicycles: Use the cart/bike lane unless passing a slower-moving vehicle or

preparing to turn. Make sure the vehicular lane is clear before moving into it, and signal your intention. Watch for traffic entering, exiting or crossing your lane. Bikes should travel single file in cart/bike lanes.

E. Local Roads

Local Roads in The Villages serve the residential neighborhoods, town centers, shopping and office plazas, country clubs, assisted living facilities, regional recreation centers and other destinations within The Villages. The roads are designed to serve the traffic just for that local destination and typically do not encourage through traffic.

- Residential Neighborhood Roads

There are more than 300 miles of neighborhood roads suitable for cycling in The Villages. Each of The Villages' 80+ residential neighborhoods ("Villages") typically has only one point of entry/exit onto a collector road. From the entrance into each neighborhood, the local roads are arranged in loops and cul-de-sacs. These roads do not serve any through traffic, so they are low-volume and low-speed. Neighborhood roads have no lane markings but are wide enough for two-way traffic. There is little on-street parking because by custom, residents and most guests park in their garages and driveways. However, service trucks and overflow guests do park on these streets, so passing vehicles need to use caution and yield to oncoming vehicles.



Figure 11: Local Roads – typical residential neighborhood roads with very low traffic volume, frequent intersections and driveways

Dimensions: Typically 19' wide, with no lane markings.

Intersections and Entrances: Cross streets and side streets are controlled with stop signs. Residential driveway entrances line the streets and there may be entrances to neighborhood pools and mail centers with their parking areas. Cart paths from golf courses or connecting to a multi-modal path occasionally intersect with neighborhood streets; traffic on the cart path has the stop sign.

Speed Limits: 15 or 20 mph, slower by custom. Neighborhood roads are typically not posted, which means that they are covered by the signs at each of The Villages entrances that say "20 mph unless otherwise posted" (Figure 31).

Guidelines for Bicycles: Neighborhood roads are ideal for novice riders and slow riders, and are used by all levels of riders. High-speed riding in neighborhoods is not appropriate. Cycling is a great way to get to know your way around The Villages, but if you are exploring a new neighborhood, be aware that it is easy to lose your bearings. Watch the street names at each turn or refer to the Villages App (see Appendix 6) if you get lost.

- **Town Center Roads**

Roads leading into the Town Centers are usually collector roads, but in the area around the town squares, the cart/bike lanes are replaced with on-street parking. These roads are the only streets in The Villages that have parallel or angled parking along their edges. The roads have two lanes for vehicular traffic, typically with two-way traffic, but portions of the road are one-way and may have angled parking on both sides. Large parking lots are located behind the town center buildings, within easy walking distance to all of the attractions. The Town Centers have heavy pedestrian traffic and there are numerous pedestrian crosswalks, marked with striping and brick pavers.



Figure 12: Town Center road with parallel parking



Figure 13: Town Center road with diagonal parking

Dimensions: Traffic lanes are typically 11' wide with additional paving marked for parallel or diagonal parking.

Intersections and Entrances: Intersections within the Town Centers are controlled by stop signs plus a few stoplights. The roads have multiple entrances to the many parking lots that serve visitors and employees of the Town Center businesses. Usually there is ample parking in these lots but during special events the entire area can become very congested.

Speed Limits: 20 mph, much slower by custom. Town Center roads are typically not posted, so they are covered by the overall signs at each The Villages entrance, "20 mph unless otherwise posted" (Figure 31).

Guidelines for Bicycles: Heavy pedestrian traffic, carts and cars moving in and out of parking spaces, and distracted drivers call for a high degree of caution on all Town Center roads. During special events cyclists are generally required to walk their bikes inside the central area marked by barriers.

- Other Local Roads

The Villages' many strip shopping centers, medical facilities, offices, recreation centers, country clubs, assisted living/memory care/rehab centers and other community features each have their own system of entrance roads, circulation and parking. Roads and parking lots in all of these businesses and amenities are held to The Villages' high standards for design, development and maintenance.

Speed Limits: 20 mph unless posted otherwise; slower by custom.

Guidelines for Bicycles: When visiting these facilities by bicycle, follow the street markings and stop signs, watch for pedestrians and anticipate vehicles that may move into your path, particularly in the parking lots.



Figure 14: Typical local road and parking serving a recreation center

F. Multi-Modal Paths, Tunnels and Bridges

The multi-modal paths in The Villages are wide, asphalt-paved pathways for shared use by pedestrians, golf carts, bicycles and various other human-powered or small-motor-powered

devices. They all include a wayfinding system to ease navigation for bicycles and other users on the paths. The multi-modal path routes parallel the arterial roads throughout The Villages and feed into the cart/bike lanes on collector roads and thus to the local roads, providing an uninterrupted network of routes for golf carts to travel to any destination in The Villages. Golf carts are not permitted to travel on or to cross roads with speed limits of 35 mph or higher (except street-legal carts, which may travel on 35 mph roads), so they are required to use the tunnels that go under arterial roads. Since by the laws of the State of Florida, bicycles are permitted to use any of the roads in and around The Villages, cyclists can choose whether to use the roads or the multi-modal paths and their tunnels.



Figure 15: Typical multi-modal path with divided and undivided sections



Figure 16: Multi-modal path with divided and undivided sections

The multi-modal paths have alternating sections with and without a central landscaped island. Carts and cyclists travel on the right side of the path, while walkers and runners use the left side, facing into approaching vehicle traffic. Any user wishing to pass another user must wait until it is completely safe to do so, and then provide a comfortable passing margin (3' is

recommended) and a comfortable distance before moving back into their line of travel.

Dimensions: Typically 16' from edge to edge, or in divided sections, 8' of paving in each direction separated by a landscaped median of variable width, generally 6' wide.

Intersections, Tunnels and Bridges: At road crossings, multi-modal path traffic is always required to stop for road traffic and to wait until it is safe to cross. Because golf carts are not permitted on roads with speed limits of 35 mph or more, multi-modal paths are routed under arterial roads in tunnels at 39 locations. At traffic circles, multi-modal paths cross collector roads on a specially-paved and marked section of pavement that is typically located inside the Entrance/Exit Gates. There are two bridges within the multi-modal path network: one that crosses over SR 27/441 (Figure 18), and one where the multi-modal path parallels Morse Boulevard over Lake Sumter (Figure 19).

Speed Limits: There are no posted speed limits on multi-modal paths, but standard golf carts are not allowed to be sold with motors that exceed 20 mph, so that is their general pace.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicyclists have full use of the multi-modal paths and also have the legal right to travel on any of the roads in and around The Villages. Each cyclist, or each ride group leader, should make the choice based on their skill level, current conditions and personal preference. Cyclists using the multi-modal paths follow the same rules as golf carts, stopping and yielding to cars at all road intersections or entrances. Cyclists may travel at any speed that is comfortable for them, but should always be mindful of safety and courtesy toward other users.



Figure 17: Typical tunnel entrance/exit

Tunnels: Tunnels on the multi-modal paths require cyclists to use special caution because users may have difficulty seeing other users, particularly when turning in or out of a tunnel. This can be an issue for groups of riders since the steep exit hill can cause unexpected stops. A tunnel entrance/exit may require a sharp turn and may serve traffic from two or even three directions. Some tunnels have speed bumps or divider curbs which can be difficult to see and to maneuver. Novice cyclists need to be aware that the path leading out of a tunnel can be quite steep, requiring lower gears or even walking the bike up the short hill. Cyclists using multi-modal paths need to be alert to traffic at tunnel entrances even if they are not using the tunnel. Cyclists may choose to use the at-grade road crossings instead of the tunnels.

Bridges: Bicycles are permitted to use the multi-modal path bridge over SR 27/441 at Spanish Springs, but it is steep and narrow and most cyclists find it uncomfortable. The many signalized intersections are better choices for most cyclists to cross this busy road, leaving the bridge for golf cart use.



Figure 18: Multi-modal path bridge over SR 441/27



Figure 19: Multi-modal paths on bridge over Lake Sumter (Morse Boulevard)

Where Morse Boulevard crosses Lake Sumter, cyclists may use the road lanes or the multi-modal path lanes. Either choice requires caution. The road has four 10' lanes with a double yellow line in the center. Cyclists need to be aware that the lanes are too narrow for both a bike and a car, so cars must change lanes to pass, which can be hazardous for all concerned when traffic is heavy. On the multi-modal path, when the pathway reaches the bridge it narrows into two 5' lanes of opposing traffic, with a posted speed limit of 10 mph for carts and bikes. A one-foot-high concrete curb separates multi-modal path traffic from cars travelling on the bridge. A 4' wide sidewalk parallels the cart/bike lanes along the outside (western) edge of the bridge. Novice riders or very slow riders may feel more comfortable walking their bikes along the sidewalk, or riding there if no pedestrians are present.

G. Intersections

- Traffic Circle Intersections

Many of the intersections on Buena Vista Boulevard and Morse Boulevard are traffic circles (roundabouts). Traffic circles are circular roadways where all entering vehicles yield to traffic that is already in the circle, travel counterclockwise around a central landscaped island and leave the circle to continue traveling in their desired direction. See Appendix 7 (*Navigating Roundabouts*) for detailed instructions. There are 31 traffic circles in The Villages, so all residents and visitors need to learn to use them safely.

The Villages' traffic circles may be 4-way, 3-way or 3-way with a bypass lane (see Figures 20, 21, and 22 below).

Speed Limit: 20 mph approaching and within the Traffic Circle, regardless of the speed limits of the roads it serves.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicycles follow the same instructions as cars for navigating the circles, but must remember they are not as visible as a car and are much more vulnerable, and so must use extra caution. Cyclists should not encourage cars to stop in the circle to let them through. If a car stops when it should be moving through the circle, cyclists should stop at the circle entrance and wave the car to go on, and not proceed until the car goes by. The driver thinks he/she is doing the cyclist a favor, but is actually setting both the car and the cyclist up for a crash when other cars approach from behind.



Figure 20: Typical 4-way traffic circle



Figure 21: Typical 3-way traffic circle



Figure 22: Typical traffic circle: 3-way with bypass lane

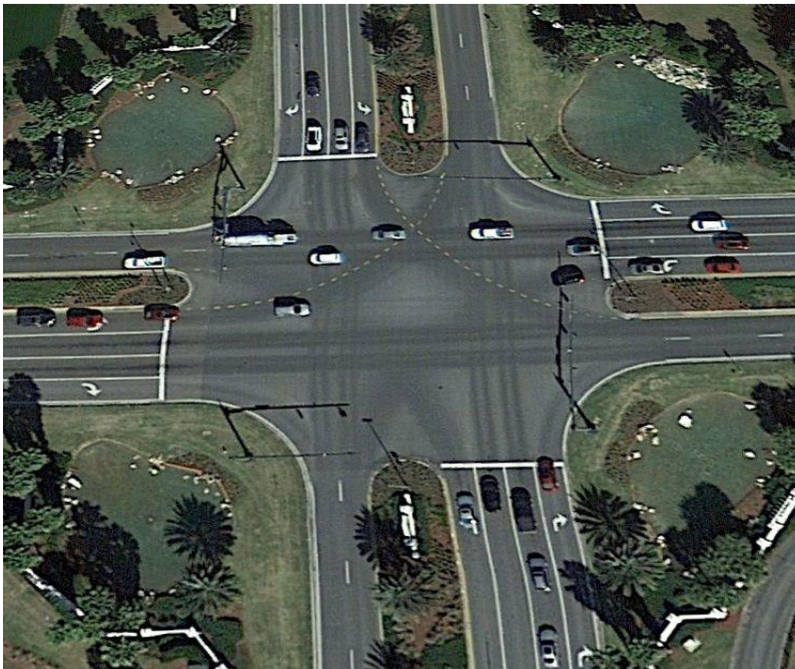


Figure 23: Signalized intersection at two arterial roads: CR466 and Buena Vista Boulevard



Figure 24: Signalized intersection at arterial and collector roads: CR466 and Belvedere/CR101, with tunnel entrances

- Signalized Intersections

Several of The Villages' busiest intersections are controlled with traffic signals using standard configurations of turn lanes and turning light cycles. CR466 and CR466A have several signals. Traffic signals may occur where two collector roads intersect (i.e., Canal/Bonita, St. Charles/Bailey Trail) and in various other places.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicycles shall follow the same laws as other vehicles at traffic signals. See Appendix 8 for lane-changing recommendations. The traffic signals in The Villages have excellent sensors that pick up bicycles even when no other vehicles are present.

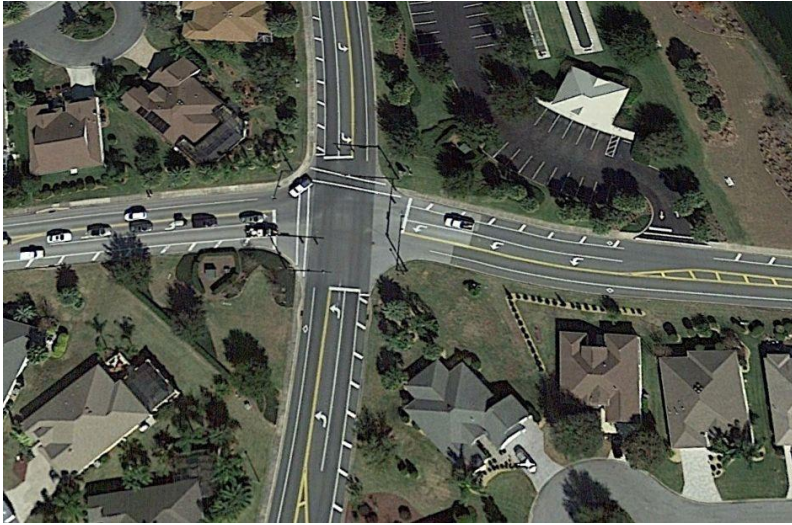


Figure 25: Signalized intersection at two collector roads: Bailey Trail and St. Charles

- Stop Sign Intersections

On every type of road or path, virtually every intersection or entrance that is not governed by a traffic circle or a signal light will have stop signs indicating who is expected to stop and who has the right of way. Usually the standard red octagonal sign is used, but on multi-modal paths the stop sign may be painted on a post or on the path itself.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicycles are always governed by the same laws as all other vehicles at stop sign intersections.

- Golf Course Pathway Intersections

Golf course pathways occasionally intersect with collector roads, neighborhood roads and multi-modal paths. These paths are for the exclusive use of golfers. They are typically paved with concrete and are clearly marked as part of the golf course they serve. When a path crosses a street, the crossing is marked with stripes similar to a pedestrian crosswalk.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicycles are not permitted on the golf course paths. When approaching a path crossing, cyclists must watch for golf carts since they may not be aware of the cross-traffic.

H. Entrance/Exit Gates

Entrance/Exit Gates are located at many of the village entrances throughout The Villages. However, The Villages is not a "gated community" in the sense of restricting entrance; anyone can enter any of the gates just by pressing a button. Since the roads are county roads, the three counties require that all roads must be fully accessible for emergency equipment and maintenance. The Villages' gates serve several purposes:

- to provide public ingress and egress
- to slow traffic
- to provide security, both actual (with surveillance cameras) and perceived
- to give directions and information if needed

There are two types of gates: staffed and unstaffed. Locations of staffed gates appear to be based on traffic volume, but some busy gates are unstaffed. Gate attendants are available to give directions, answer questions and call for assistance if needed.



Figure 26: : Typical staffed gate (with gatehouse)

Some of the gates serve more than one village, and some villages have no entrance gate. Most of the entrance gates have two lanes, one for residents and one for visitors. At staffed gates, residents use gate cards in the right lane while visitors pass by the attendant. At unstaffed gates, the gates in both lanes can be opened with a gate card or by pressing the red button. If the red button is pressed, a greeting voice is heard and will provide help if needed. Some unstaffed entrance gates have only one lane that serves both residents and visitors.

Almost all of the exit gates are a single lane with a gate that lifts automatically when activated by the sensor/camera. Morse Blvd at CR466, Morse Blvd at El Camino and Bailey Trail at Buena Vista have double exit gates activated by sensors.



Figure 27: Typical unstaffed gate (no gatehouse)

Dimensions: Typically each lane is 11' wide.

Speed Limits: Traffic approaching entrance gates is expected to come to a full stop. The speed limit at exit gates is 5 mph.



Figure 28: Typical staffed gate

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicycles are expected to follow the same procedures as any other vehicle using the gates. Some gate arms are spaced far enough from the curb for a bicycle to pass through without opening the gate, but cyclists must be aware that if there is a golf cart path crossing behind the gate, golf carts tend to use a closed gate arm as a sign that it is safe for them to proceed. All vehicles including bicycles are expected to exercise caution and courtesy in the gate area. Gates close after each vehicle, so cyclists should be aware that if a car passes them after the cyclist has activated the sensor, the gate may close before the bicycle can get through.

I. Signage

Signs in The Villages serve several functions: traffic control, instruction, identity and information. The Villages has very strict signage controls. Advertising signs and billboards are generally not permitted on properties within The Villages, so the visual clutter that is rampant in the rest of Florida is virtually absent.

Traffic Control and Instruction Signs: At major entry points, signs announce "Speed Limit 20 Unless Otherwise Posted" (Figure 31) Throughout The Villages, standard traffic control signs are mounted on attractive posts. The instruction signs at the approach to each traffic circle (Figure 30) are particularly important since many drivers are not familiar with traffic circles.



Figure 29: Typical traffic circle instruction sign



Figure 30: The Villages' "Speed limit 20 unless otherwise posted" sign

Identity and Information Signs: The "Welcome to The Villages" signs announce that it is a golf cart community, which alerts newcomers to the presence of unusual vehicles and the need for slower speeds and extra caution. "Bicycle Friendly Community" signs appear near main traffic entrances to The Villages. Wall-mounted or free-standing monument signs identify most of the neighborhood entries as well as recreation centers, country clubs and other community features. Street name signs are consistently placed at corners in the residential neighborhoods and on standard overhead mounts at traffic signals. Street names are also included in the traffic circle instruction signs. All tunnels have an identity number sign which should be used in reporting maintenance problems or for emergency 911 calls.



Figure 31: Tunnel identity sign (also note fisheye mirror)

Pavement Markings: Various traffic control messages are conveyed with markings and signs painted onto pavement, particularly on traffic circles, collector roads and multi-modal paths. These include diamonds and lettering to identify the cart/bike lanes, turn arrows, merge arrows and lane endings at intersections, and stop signs at tunnel exits. Raised reflectors are used to

mark curves, fire hydrant locations and where otherwise needed. In addition to heeding the messages, cyclists need to be aware that the painted markings can be slippery when wet and that hitting a raised reflector can cause loss of control of the bike.

J. Major External Roads

The Villages is surrounded by major roads that are often crossed by cyclists who wish to enjoy the many route options in the surrounding countryside. Some of the major roads are traveled by experienced cyclists or groups, usually for short distances to reach a less-traveled road. Bicycle club members use these routes frequently and can give advice on the best crossing points and remote destinations.

U.S. 301 parallels the western edge of The Villages, about ¼ mile to one mile west of The Villages' borders. It is generally a four-lane divided highway that carries high-speed traffic. U.S. 301 has bike lanes on some sections but is not an enjoyable place to ride. Its few signalized intersections are the safest places to cross. Most cyclists can cross comfortably at non-signalized intersections by waiting for breaks in the traffic and using the median area to wait again if necessary.

CR 42 forms the northern boundary of The Villages. This is a relatively busy road that can be crossed easily at the signal at the northern terminus of Buena Vista Boulevard. It has fairly wide shoulders and can be used for cycling if desired, particularly on weekends when traffic volume is lower. However, cyclists usually stay on it only until they reach a more rural road for riding in Marion County.

SR 441/27 is close to the eastern borders of The Villages and, for a short distance, runs between the three villages of “historic section” and the rest of The Villages (see Fig. 18 for a photo of the connecting golf cart bridge). SR 441/27 is a very busy road with a high concentration of shopping and other businesses and is definitely not suitable for cycling on the road. However, it has frequent signalized intersections which make it easy for cyclists to cross over to reach the many good cycling routes in Lake and Marion Counties.

SR 44 is on the 2016 southern boundary of The Villages. It is a high-speed, high-traffic road with a large volume of truck traffic, so even though it has fairly wide shoulders, it is not very comfortable for cyclists. There is a signalized crossing at the southern terminus of Morse Boulevard that leads onto CR 468 and open expanses of country riding to the south.

Other External Roads

Most of the area surrounding The Villages is still primarily rural, but it is becoming more developed and will continue to change within the lifetime of this document. There is an extensive network of county roads (CR) in all three counties that surround The Villages, many of them very quiet and beautiful. Some of the busier routes frequented by cyclists include:

- CR472, which starts in The Villages as Rainey Trail
- Powell Road, which becomes CR462
- CR44A and a portion of CR 468 that runs parallel to SR44
- the portions of CR466 and CR466A that lie outside of The Villages
- CR468, the southward continuation of Morse Blvd which connects to the future development section including the new “Village of Fenney.” currently under construction (see page 15).

These and other roads may be redesigned as the area surrounding The Villages becomes more developed. Cyclists need to advocate for bike lanes, signs and other bike-friendly features.

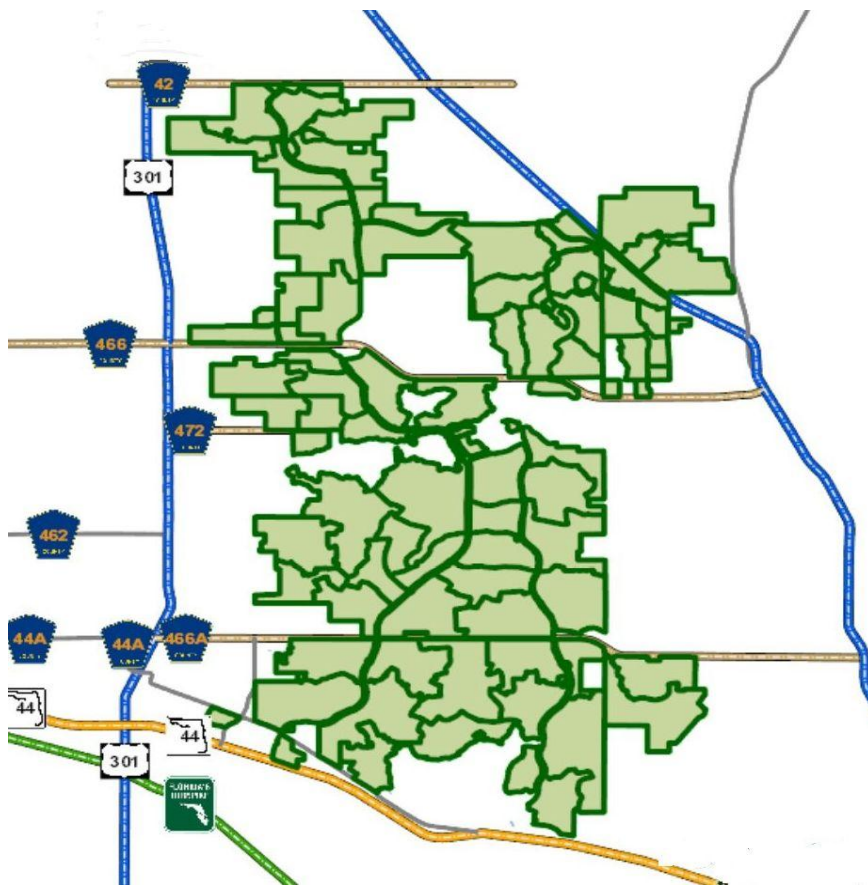


Figure 32: Major External Roads

K. Facilities for Bicyclists

Cyclists can go from their homes directly to any The Villages destination – 83 recreation centers, 82 swimming pools, 12 country clubs with championship golf courses, 36 executive golf courses, three multi-field softball complexes, a polo stadium, theaters, countless restaurants and stores and much more.

At most of these facilities cyclists will find rest rooms, water fountains, bike racks and shelters that are accessible to all residents and their guests. Rest rooms and water fountains can be found with less than a five-minute bicycle ride from any point in The Villages. The Villages is considered a very high thunderstorm risk region, particularly in the summer, and if a thunderstorm threatens, cyclists can take shelter at the neighborhood mail pick-up centers, recreation centers and pavilions located throughout The Villages.

Public Safety facilities, including two sheriff's offices, local police stations and seven fire stations, have facilities to support riders. More than 3,000 Villagers have received training in first aid, including CPR and use of defibrillators. There are over 70 first-response teams of volunteers in the communities able to help in medical emergencies.

Two bike shops are located within The Villages and there are several others nearby; see Appendix 9 for details.

The Villages' bike clubs conduct scheduled rides virtually every day of the week. These rides are open to any resident and offer different speed groups so each new rider can find a group that matches his or her skill level. The ride leaders and other club members mentor new riders, explaining ride procedures and safety practices. The rides and club meetings are publicized in the weekly Recreation News that is distributed in the Daily Sun newspaper and is available free at all recreation centers every day. Ride schedules are also publicized on the recreation website and bike clubs' websites. See Appendix 2 for details. The clubs are:

- The Village Bicycle Club <http://www.thevillagebicycleclub.com/>
- The Sumter Landing Bicycle Club <https://slbike.club/>
- PANTHERS Tandem Bicycle Club <http://floridatandemclub.org/>

The Villages map of multi-modal paths and roads with bike/cart lanes is available free at the sales and information centers. This schematic map also shows tunnels, traffic circles, golf courses, regional recreation centers, town centers and nearby external roads (Appendix 10).

The Villages App is a free wayfinding and information app for mobile devices. It provides routes for either motorists or golf carts (via the multi-modal paths) to any destination within The Villages, with excellent maps. For new cyclists or anyone who wants to explore an unfamiliar area, The Villages App makes route planning easy. It is also helpful if a cyclist gets lost or disoriented and needs to find the best way “home”, since it always knows where one is. The app can be downloaded from app stores. See Appendix 8 for more information.



Figure 33: The Villages App

Bike Trails in the Surrounding Area – The State of Florida has numerous paved multi-purpose trails and several of them are located within easy driving distance of The Villages. The Withlacoochee Trail, West Orange Trail, Van Fleet Trail and others provide destinations for cyclists and cycling groups (Appendix 11).

VI. Needs Analysis

A. Engineering

Goal: Maintain and enhance bicycle facilities in The Villages to continue to meet or exceed accepted standards and guidelines.

Engineering of roads and multi-modal paths in The Villages is complete and the entire network has been built so infrastructure needs are not anticipated within the life of this document.

An ongoing need will be to monitor road and multi-modal path conditions and make recommendations for repairs, maintenance and minor enhancements: signs, bike racks, adjustments to gates, speed bumps, reflectors and any potential hazards to safe cycling. For example, some of the multi-modal path wayfinding signs are so faded that they cannot be read; touch-up painting is recommended. Bicycle club members and other cycling advocates need to participate in meetings of the Multi-Modal Path Discussion Group (a sub-committee of the Project Wide Advisory Committee (PWAC) and the Amenity Authority Committee (ACC)) whenever their agenda includes issues that may affect cyclists,



Figure 34: Some wayfinding signs on multi-modal paths need touch-up painting

The bicycle club members and cycling advocates also need to stay aware of potential and proposed road projects in the surrounding area and work to ensure that bike lanes, appropriate traffic direction signs and other bicycle friendly features are included in any new projects.

B. Education

Goal: Educate cyclists, motorists, golf cart operators and other users of the roads and multi-modal paths so everyone knows the laws and behaviors that will make The Villages safe and enjoyable for cycling.

115,000+ residents of The Villages need to be made aware of laws and safety practices regarding cyclists on the roads and multi-modal paths and their interaction with automobiles, golf carts and other users. All possible means of disseminating and reinforcing safety information need to be explored and used.

- **League Cycling Instructors (LCIs)** - Full use needs to be made of the eight LCIs who have gone through the rigorous training process conducted by the League of American Bicyclists, and additional instructors need to be trained. An effective system is needed to publicize, schedule and deploy the LCIs to make presentations and conduct workshops for clubs, neighborhood groups and other venues. Additional LCIs will be needed in the near future, requiring recruitment of volunteers, possibly to include members of the Recreation Department staff and area law enforcement officers. Training sessions will need to be scheduled.
- **Newspapers and Other Local Media** - Media serving The Villages are a key component of any education effort. Cycling advocates need to feed the media a continuous stream of interesting stories and articles that embody the messages of safe cycling through awareness of laws and best cycling practices. Current levels of media coverage need to be maintained and expanded.
- **Bike Club Education Programs** - Educational programs conducted at the bicycle club meetings need to be continued and expanded. Safety briefings need to be given at each scheduled group ride.



Figure 35: Bike club safety briefing

- **Area Bike Shops** - The two bike shops located in The Villages and four nearby shops that serve residents of The Villages are often the first point of contact for new cyclists, so shop employees need to play an important role in distributing information on safety and best cycling practices. They also need to be aware of opportunities to reinforce safety messages with their returning customers and seasoned cyclists who come in for repairs.
- **Hands-On Instruction for New and Returning Cyclists** - Since the Bike Clubs are not able to reach all novice cyclists or residents who may wish to take up cycling in the future, additional methods of reaching non-club members need to be found.
- **Cycling Education for Children** - Although children and teens under 19 are not allowed to live in The Villages, cycling safety instruction is needed for the children living and attending schools in the surrounding area, including The Villages' four family neighborhoods. The opportunity also exists to provide cycling safety instruction to visiting grandchildren through established programs of "Camp Villages"

C. Enforcement

Goal: Work with the law enforcement entities in the three counties and three towns in which The Villages is located for effective enforcement of traffic laws, based on the known and predicted causes of collisions between bicycles and other vehicles.

The law enforcement agencies that cover portions of The Villages are the Florida Highway Patrol, Sumter County Sheriff's Office, Lake County Sheriff's Office, Marion County Sheriff's Office, Town of Lady Lake Police Department, City of Wildwood Police Department and City of Fruitland Park Police Department. Additionally, the Florida Highway Patrol enforces motor vehicle and commercial vehicle laws and is charged with investigating motor vehicle crashes on roadways within unincorporated areas.

The relationship between cyclists and law enforcement agencies in The Villages has been informal and is complicated by the number of different departments involved. Several LCIs and bike club officers have taken the initiative to develop more formal dialogue with these departments regarding cycling safety, laws and rules of the road for motorists and cyclists; these efforts need to be expanded. They have already resulted in a better understanding of how informed law enforcement and an educated cycling community can improve road safety for all road users.

- **Awareness of Laws** - The Education needs outlined above overlap with the Enforcement needs that involve disseminating and reinforcing knowledge of laws that govern all users of the roads and multi-modal paths in The Villages, such as publishing articles and letters to the editor, distributing “safety tips” handouts, conducting LCI presentations at new residents’ meetings and club meetings, and participating in expos and activities sponsored by the Recreation Department. See Appendices 21 and 23.
- **Officer Training** - New and existing law enforcement officers need to have complete knowledge of all laws governing cyclists in the State of Florida. In terms of what a police officer or deputy is called upon to face during a day’s work, traffic infractions by cyclists may be a relatively low priority. Nonetheless, violations can pose serious consequences to all involved in a crash. In order for a law enforcement officer to issue advice, a warning or a citation, the officer must be well trained in the specific set of laws that apply to cyclists and their accepted interpretation. Knowing the laws and the proper road positioning for cyclists is the foundation for a safe and predictable cycling environment.
- **Reporting of Crashes and Incidents** - For the cycling community and law enforcement to work cooperatively, information needs to be exchanged in an orderly way. Crash reporting methods used by each of the law enforcement departments need to be understood and data needs to be collected on at least an annual basis. The internal Incident Report system developed by the bicycle clubs need to be improved and shared with law enforcement personnel and, where gate incidents are involved, with Community Watch personnel.

D. Encouragement

Goal: Encourage increased ridership among all levels of cyclists, including new cyclists and those who have not ridden for many years; expand awareness of cycling through charity rides, bike expos and other organized events; and raise awareness of the health, fitness and social benefits of cycling at any age.

When LCIs speak at the New Residents' Meetings, they ask, "How many of you have a bicycle in your garage?" A surprising number (almost half the attendees) raise their hands. But with the second question "How many of you ride your bike?" most of the hands disappear. Clearly there are many residents in The Villages who could be encouraged to become regular riders. In addition, all of the non-riders need to be encouraged to honor the rules and courtesies that make a safe, comfortable experience for cyclists and vehicle drivers.

- **Fitness and Health Benefits** - The main motivator among regular cyclists in The Villages is improved fitness. Information on the health benefits of cycling needs to be spread to the widest possible audience. Many personal success stories have already been shared through the media and the bike club websites; these are a particularly effective way to convey the messages of health and fitness through cycling.
- **Socialization** - The social connections forged through a common interest in cycling are important to health as well as quality of life. Cycling can be done alone, with a companion or in group, and with any of choices, the cyclist is likely to meet other people who are also cyclists or just curious about the bike or the day's route. The existing and expanding bicycle clubs offer a well-publicized means for new cyclists to make social connections. Additional ways to encourage newcomers and assure social connections are needed.
- **Confidence for New or Returning Riders** - Older people who have not ridden a bike for a long time, or perhaps never learned to ride, are often fearful: afraid of getting lost, afraid of falling, afraid of not being strong enough to get up a hill or to get back home, afraid of looking foolish and so forth. The bike clubs tend to attract people who are already confident cyclists; some sort of beginner's class or mentoring program is needed to attract people who lack cycling confidence, to work through their issues and find solutions to get them on the road.
- **Special Events** - The occasional cyclist is often inspired by a special event, a charity ride or an interesting remote destination. Special events also raise awareness of cycling and its benefits among the non-cycling population. Several annual cycling events attract wide participation in The Villages; needs include more volunteers, new ideas for publicity, additional sponsors and additional participants. There is plenty of room on the calendar for additional events as well.
- **Image and Public Relations** - Cyclists are a visible minority in The Villages, and many non-cycling residents have negative perceptions that can contribute to unsafe riding conditions or even crashes. In addition to the Education and Enforcement needs outlined above, each cyclist has the opportunity to be a goodwill ambassador in every encounter with drivers on the roads or multi-modal paths.

E. Evaluation

Goal: Evaluate progress toward the goals of Cycling The Villages on a regular basis and advocate for cyclists' needs as the area continues to grow in the future.

Cycling The Villages is intended to be a dynamic document that can be easily updated and changed to meet new circumstances. The Bike Friendly Advocacy Group or its successors and The Villages Recreation Department need to establish a review process that provides annual evaluation of the goals, needs and recommendations, noting progress and making additions or changes as needed.



Figure 36: Rohan Regional Recreation Center

VII. Public Input for *Cycling The Villages*

A. Survey of Bicycle Club Members

At the request of The Villages Bicycle Friendly Advocacy Committee in [DATE], investigators with the University of Florida's Department of Urban and Regional Planning carried out a survey of bicyclists in The Villages. The goal of the survey was to help document the existing environment prior to drafting *Cycling The Villages*. After developing the survey instrument and getting the necessary approval from the University's Institutional Review Board, The Village Bicycle Club, the Sumter Landing Bicycle Club and the PANTHERS Tandem Club publicized it to their members. When the survey was closed, 350 responses had been received. A full analysis of the survey is available in Appendix 12.

Summary findings:

- **Demographics** - Respondents averaged 69 years old, three quarters of them were male, and they were mostly full time residents.
- **Riding** - They rode three times a week, overwhelmingly with others, averaging more than 50 miles, and fewer rode in summer.
- **Goals** - They rode for primarily for fitness and also for leisure but not for commuting.
- **Crashes** - About a third had crashed, some multiple times, most often with other bicycles. They blamed themselves about a third of the time, others a little more frequently, and cited errors and distractions as the main reasons for the crashes.
- **Infrastructure and Safety** - They liked The Villages bike infrastructure but wanted more bike parking, and felt safest on neighborhood roads and roads striped with golf cart/bike lanes. They did not feel as safe on - and did not use as much - the Multi Modal Paths.
- **Wants** - They almost all wanted or saw the need for more bike education, followed at some distance - but still near to a majority - by improved enforcement, signage, bike

parking, and street and Multi Modal Paths. Only a fifth thought that maintenance needed improvement.

Detailed findings:

- **Snowbirds v. Full Time Residents** - A good majority of respondents reside more than 3 seasons. 59% of respondents reported that they reside in The Villages for more than 9 months a year, with 17% staying 6 to 9 months, 13% 3 to 6 months, and 11% less than that.
- **Bike Mileage** - About two thirds of respondents ride over 50 miles a week. A third of respondents ride more than 100 miles a week, with about the same amount riding 50 to 100 miles. A fifth ride 25-50 miles and the remaining 12% ride less than 25 miles.
- **Seasonal Riding** - Almost all respondents ride all year, with a drop in summer. More than 90% report riding in fall, winter and spring, but only 74% report riding in the summer.
- **Purposes for Bicycling** - Respondents overwhelmingly ride for fitness and almost none commute by bike. 89% reported that they rode often or always for fitness. Next most popular was the 36% who rode for leisure often or always. Much lower but about tied were shopping/doing errands (7% often or always) and personal business (5% often or always). Dead last, as would be suspected in a retirement community, was work commuting, with 93% reporting that they never ride for that reason.
- **Riding with Others** - Half of respondents ride with others. 47% of respondents reported that they often ride with others, and 25% reported they always do, while 28% ride with others sometimes, rarely or never. Given that many of the survey participants were members of The Villages bicycle clubs, this result may not be representative of the total Villages biking population.
- **Crashes** - About a third of respondents had crashed, mostly with no one else or another bicycle involved and were overwhelmingly from rider error or distraction. 28% of respondents reported a bike crash. Others involved in those crashes included none - 20%, other bicycle - 19%, motor vehicle - 7%, and pedestrian 1%. The primary factor in the crashes were user error/distraction - 58%, roads and other infrastructure problems - 21%, mechanical - 4% and other at 17%.

- **Improvements Desired** - Respondents listed grocery store bike parking most often. Few respondents requested specific improvements in this open ended question, but those who did asked for bike racks at grocery stores, bike-only lanes and lower speeds for cars.
- **Infrastructure Satisfaction and Feeling Safe** - Respondents liked The Villages bike infrastructure, but half didn't care for its bike parking. 84% of respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with the bicycle infrastructure in The Villages, but only 47% were somewhat or very satisfied with its bicycle parking facilities. Respondents feeling of safety varied widely with type of road. Only 48% felt somewhat or very safe on the Multi Modal Paths (which are shared by golf carts, bikes, and pedestrians), but 77% felt somewhat or very safe on roads with painted golf cart/bike lanes. Similarly, only 43% felt somewhat or very safe on The Villages main roads (e.g., Morse and Buena Vista Boulevards), but 87% felt safe on the neighborhood streets.
- **Weekly Riding** - Most of the respondents ride 3 days a week (which coincidentally is the number of days each of the bike clubs have scheduled rides at the various locations). 40% report that they ride 3 days a week, followed by 4 days at 19%, 21% ride one or two days a week, 11% ride 5 days a week and 9% ride 6 or 7 days a week.
- **Usage of Road Types** - Respondents reporting often or always using Multi Modal Paths was 38%, streets with painted golf/bike lanes 89%, main roads 70% and neighborhood streets 79%.
- **Multiple Crashes** - Half of respondents who crashed reported only one. Of the 28% of respondents who reported a crash, 46% reported 1, 34% reported 2, 12% reported 3 and 9% reported 4 or more. Medical attention was required in 43% of reported crashes (33% of first crashes, 22% of second crashes, and 38% of third crashes).
- **Other Parties to Crashes** - In rank order, other parties to crashes were bicycles, none, motor vehicles, golf carts and last and least, pedestrians. Parties reported to be involved in the crashes included Bicycles (46% of first crashes, 41% of second crashes, and 41% of third crashes), None (26% of first crashes, 28% of second crashes, and 29% of third crashes), Motor Vehicles (26% of first crashes, 13% of second crashes, and 24% of third crashes), Golf Carts (7% of first crashes, 10% of second crashes, and 1% of third crashes) and Pedestrians (1% of first crashes and 3% of second and third crashes).

- **Party at Fault in Crashes** - Respondents felt at fault in about a third of the crashes, but slightly less than the other party. Generally, 35% of respondents who crashed thought they were at fault, 39% felt the other party was at fault, and the remaining 27% thought both, neither or another party was at fault. Regarding multiple crashes, respondents who thought they were at fault numbered 46% for the first crash, 33% for the second and 47% for the third crash; they felt the other person was at fault 30% for the first crash, 44% for the second, and 12% for the third. Both, neither and another party totaled 22% in first crashes, 23% in second crashes and 42% in third crashes.
- **Primary Contributor to Crash** - Respondents believed they were the cause of a large majority of the crashes. Respondents who thought they were the primary factor in the first crash were 78%, 67% for the second crash and 53% of the third crash. They cited infrastructure in 13% of first crashes, 17% of second, and 6% of third. Mechanical issues were cited only 2% in first crashes, 7% of second, and 2% of third.
- **Crash Location** - Respondents provided a wide listing of where they suffered their first, second and third crashes.
- **Changes Needed** - Respondents thought bike education was the biggest need in The Villages. Respondents ranked that The Villages somewhat or very much needed: bicycle education (87%), improved enforcement (62%), improved signage (58%), improved bike parking (55%), improved on street paths (48%), improved Multi Modal Paths (36%), and improved maintenance (20%).
- **Age and Gender** - Respondents averaged 69 years old, ranged in age from 96 to 54 and younger, and were 73% male.

B. Input from Residents through The Villages' Annual Survey

Every year The Villages conducts a sophisticated survey of residents, covering a wide range of topics that influence future developments in the Community Development Districts and commercial properties. The survey is distributed to every resident and enjoys a very high response rate. In 2017, for the first time, questions on bicycle usage will be included in the survey. While the actual questions have not yet been finalized, they are expected to yield reliable data on:

- Bicycle ownership
- Frequency of riding among bicycle owners
- Preference for types of roads and/or multi-modal paths used for cycling
- Estimated number of collisions and near-miss incidents between bicyclists and automobile or golf cart drivers

Results from the 2017 survey will provide a baseline of information on cycling in The Villages. Future surveys will be useful for tracking trends and may suggest new issues to be addressed when *Cycling The Villages* is updated.

C. Input from Multiple Jurisdictions and Agencies

Draft copies of *Cycling The Villages* were submitted for review and comment to the following jurisdictions, agencies and individuals.

Janet Tutt, District Manager
The Villages Community Development Districts

County Commissioners
Marion County
Lake County
Sumter County

Mayor's Offices
City of Fruitland Park
City of Wildwood
Town of Lady Lake

Sheriff's Departments and Police Departments

Marion County

Lake County

Sumter County

City of Fruitland Park

City of Wildwood

Town of Lady Lake

Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Corrections and additions received during the Public Input period been incorporated where appropriate into *Cycling The Villages*.

VIII. Recommended Actions

A. Engineering

Goal: Maintain and enhance bicycle facilities in The Villages to continue to meet or exceed accepted standards and guidelines.

As described in Existing Conditions (Section V) and the Needs Analysis (Section VI), virtually all of the cycling infrastructure has been master planned into The Villages since its inception. Thus, no major construction projects are recommended. Only minor recommendations for engineering changes or additions are envisaged in *Cycling The Villages*. These items include:

- **Road Signs** - Request installation of signs with bike symbol instructing motorists BICYCLES MAY USE FULL LANE in numerous locations both within The Villages and in the surrounding area (Figure 37). Recommended locations include:
 - Portions of Morse Boulevard
 - Buena Vista Boulevard
 - El Camino Boulevard
 - Rainey Trail / CR 472 from Buena Vista Boulevard to SR301
 - CR143 and CR44a from SR44 to SR301
 - CR468 from SR44 to SR301

Monitor roads for increased traffic and other conditions that may call for additional signage to help ensure the safety of cyclists and other road users such as CR501 and CR470



Figure 37: May Use Full Lane sign

- **Multi-Modal Path Signs** – Conduct an inventory of the wayfinding sign system and recommend additional signs at key points that are not currently marked. Request repainting of those wayfinding signs that have faded and become unreadable (Figure 35). Request design and installation of small educational signs or decals along the

multi-modal paths with cart/bike/pedestrian symbols and a PASS WITH CARE message. These could be placed on the existing posts at each multi-modal path intersection.

- **Multi-Modal Path Discussion Group** – Monitor the activities of the Multi-Modal Path Discussion Group and participate in its meetings whenever signs, path markings and any other changes or additions that affect cyclists are proposed or are under discussion.
- **Bike Parking** – Request installation of additional bike racks in the Town Centers at locations where cyclists are known to congregate and at other locations where existing racks have proven to be insufficient, such as at pickle ball and tennis courts. Request installation of bike racks in the strip shopping centers, particularly at the supermarkets. Respondents to the bike club survey found bicycle parking to be one of the few facilities that need to be enhanced. Ensure that new bike racks conform to APBP guidelines where possible (recommended in LAB’s Silver award analysis).



Figure 38: Additional bike racks needed

- **Speed Bump Gaps** - Advocate for redesign of speed bumps in locations that pose significant hazards for bicycles. Where appropriate, request wider gaps in speed bumps on multi-modal paths to allow bikes to go between sections.
- **Report Hazards and Maintenance Problems** – Publicize the need to call 352-753-4022 or email sam.wartinbee@districtgov.org to report any repair or maintenance issues such as malfunctioning gates, construction debris or broken glass on a roadway, broken pavement or landscape overgrowth that is blocking visibility.
- **Consistent Gate Operations** – Publicize the need to call 352-753-4022 or email sam.wartinbee@districtgov.org to report any location where gate operations are malfunctioning or are not consistent. Cyclists need to know what to expect at each gate to prevent crashes and injuries.
- **Bike Facilities on Nearby Roads and Trails Outside of the Villages** - Advocate for new bike lanes and widening of existing bike lanes on roads in the surrounding area outside The Villages. Encourage the counties to add wider bicycle lanes that are separated from

the car lanes where possible. Monitor the appropriate agencies in each of the three counties to keep posted on proposed road projects and advocate for accommodation of bicycles; attend public hearings as needed. Continue to advocate for the needed section of the Coast-to-Coast Connector Trail in south Sumter County (Appendix 14).

B. Education

Goal: Educate cyclists, motorists, golf cart operators and other users of the roads and multi-modal paths so everyone knows the laws and behaviors that will make The Villages safe and enjoyable for cycling.

- **Traffic Laws and Bicycle Status** - Continue efforts to educate bicyclists and the general public on traffic laws. Many motorists believe that bicycles do not belong on the roads, counter to Florida law that gives bicycles all the rights and privileges of a motor vehicle except on major highways, so all education efforts should stress that bicyclists must obey the laws. The 3-Foot Law should be clarified and taught to motorists and cyclists. Continue to distribute magnetic signs, golf cart license plates and t-shirts with the 3-foot law graphic; in 2015-2016, large numbers of these items have been distributed through the bike clubs.



Figure 39: Display 3-FEET LAW on signs and t-shirts

- **League Cycling Instructors (LCI) Presentations** - Continue to schedule and deliver educational presentations to neighborhood groups and clubs. Develop a variety of presentations of different lengths and topics so organizations can choose the presentation that best fits their needs and interests. Continue to publicize the availability of these sessions through notices in the weekly Recreation News, newspaper articles, bike club websites and other media.

- **Training of Additional LCIs** - Work with LAB to arrange another training session for LCIs in The Villages and recruit participants. In addition to the bike club members who have already expressed interest in LCI training, check with Recreation Department staff and law enforcement officers to see if any are interested in earning this credential.
- **Orientation for New Residents** - Continue to have LCIs speak at monthly New Residents' Meetings (with attendance in excess of 150 for most months), to help make motorists, new cyclists and potential cyclists aware of biking in The Villages. Provide bicycle safety and lane use information and distribute "Safety Tips" brochures or cards.
- **Bike Club Meetings and Safety Briefings** - Continue and expand the emphasis on safety in all bike club activities.
- **Safety Brochures and Cards** - Continue and expand distribution of LAB Quick Check brochures, "Safety Tips" cards and brochures (Appendix 15) in LCI presentations, new residents' meetings, recreation centers, bike shops, expos, special events and any other appropriate venues. Work to have them inserted in information packets for new owners and renters.
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Cycling Safety Brochure** - Publicize the seven rules of bicycle safety from the NHTSA brochure on safe cycling (Appendix 8), including a properly fitted Consumer Product Safety Commission-approved helmet. These rules are particularly important for senior cyclists, whose parts tend to break more easily than young riders and take longer to heal.
- **Classes or One-on-One Assistance for New Riders** - Explore the possibility of classes for novice riders through the Lifelong Learning College or the Recreation Department. Discuss other ways to reach out to residents who may need a little help to get started or who are interested in the "special" bikes such as tandems, recumbents or trikes.
- **Media Coverage of Cycling** - Continue to prepare monthly bike friendly columns published in the Daily Sun on various bike safety topics. Work with reporters from all media to have frequent stories about cycling, cyclists, special bike club events and charity rides (examples in Appendix 16). Increase the frequency of media coverage as much as possible to convey the messages of safe cycling through awareness of laws and best cycling practices.
- **Area Bike Shops** - Work with staff of the two bike shops located in The Villages and four nearby shops to take advantage of educational opportunities, particularly with new riders and experienced riders who are new to the area. Keep the shops supplied with safety brochures, club information and notices of upcoming events. Work with each of

the owners or managers to help them earn LAB Bicycle Friendly Business awards. Description of each of the shops can be found in Appendix 9.

- **Cycling Education for Children** - Investigate opportunities to provide cycling safety instruction for the children attending the schools in and around The Villages. Research the level of bicycle education in nearby schools and examine bicycle facilities available (Note: The Villages Charter School requires parents to drop off and pick up their children; no biking to school is permitted.) If the schools are receptive, recruit volunteers to help with bicycle safety education and special events such as bicycle rodeos to encourage students to know and follow the laws and best cycling practices. Explore the possibility of a bike safety education program for visiting grandchildren through "Camp Villages".

C. Enforcement

Goal: Work with the law enforcement entities in the three counties and three towns in which The Villages is located for effective enforcement of traffic laws, based on the known and predicted causes of collisions between bicycles and other vehicles.

The law enforcement agencies that cover The Villages are Sumter County Sheriff's Office, Lake County Sheriff's Office, Marion County Sheriff's Office, Town of Lady Lake Police Department, City of Wildwood Police Department and City of Fruitland Park Police Department. Additionally, the Florida Highway Patrol enforces motor vehicle and commercial vehicle laws and is charged with investigating motor vehicle crashes that occur on the state's Interstate highways and on all roadways within unincorporated areas of the state. Insuring that these agencies are aware of Florida cycling laws and best practices is important for maintaining an orderly traffic flow and predictable driving behavior. Recommended actions are:

- **Liaison and Updates** - Continue to forward and discuss cycling safety issues with Sumter County Sheriff's Office Villages Commander and establish similar communications with the other law enforcement agencies. Discuss the need for training materials and on-site trainers, particularly for updates on annual legislative changes
- **Officer Education** - Work to ensure that the police officers of each jurisdiction are initially and repeatedly educated on traffic law as it applies to bicyclists and motorists. Training from the International Police Mountain Bike Association, the Law Enforcement Bicycle Association and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are useful sources. This effort will engage resources such as the Law Enforcement Products: Bicycle Safety seminar, Law Enforcement's Roll Call Video: "Enforcing Law for Bicyclists", and Enhancing Bicycle Safety: Law Enforcement's Role (CD-ROM Training).

- **Law Enforcement Guidebooks** - Continue to provide Law Enforcement Guidebooks (Appendix 17) to Sumter County Sheriff's Office and begin providing them to the other law enforcement agencies.
- **Shared Best Practices** - Work to develop a best practices document that is agreeable to all of the law enforcement agencies involved in The Villages. This document would supplement existing laws to provide guidance on issues such as lane position, passing procedures, lane changes and other bicycle safety practices that are not defined in laws.
- **Crash Data** - Encourage more documentation and reporting of cyclist crash data by the law enforcement agencies. Crashes involving bicycle(s) and vehicle(s) with injuries and/or property damage must always be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency by calling 911. Collect and analyze this data at least annually to help identify sites in need of safety improvements for cyclists and motorists.
- **Cycling Summit** - Encourage and cooperate with Sumter County Sheriff's Office to hold the first annual Sumter County Sheriff's Cycling Summit.
- **Incident Data Exchange** - Establish an easily accessible two-way reporting and data exchange system to share up-to-date information between law enforcement agencies and cyclists. One of the bike clubs has designed and currently maintains an incident reporting system which allows any area cyclist to report any type of cycling-related incidents. Reports are generated and discussed by the club's board and serious harassment or dangerous motorist behavior incidents are forwarded to the appropriate law enforcement agency. This system should be expanded, publicized and made available to all cyclists, whether or not they are club members. *Note: crashes involving bicycle(s) and vehicle(s) with injuries and/or property damage must always be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency by calling 911.*
- **Bike-Mounted Video Cameras** - Share information on use of these cameras with cyclists who may wish to use the technology so they have a record in case of a crash or near-miss incident. See article in Appendix 18.
- **Routes for Special Events** - Thoroughly discuss routes for charity rides with law enforcement agencies for any of the jurisdictions included in the routes. (Sumter County Sheriff, Lady Lake and Wildwood Police Department, Lady Lake Town Manager, and Marion County Sheriff).

D. Encouragement

Goal: Encourage increased ridership among all levels of cyclists, including new cyclists and those who have not ridden for many years; expand awareness of cycling through charity rides, bike expos and other organized events; and raise awareness of the health, fitness and social benefits of cycling at any age.

The Villages offers many incentives and activities to encourage biking. Most are organized by volunteers from the 1,000+ members of the bicycle clubs. A variety of actions can be taken to boost participation and increase enjoyment of the group daily rides and special events.

- **Bike Clubs' Meetings and Outreach** – Continue and expand existing programs; explore new ways to reach potential riders, encourage novice riders and make them feel welcome.
- **Bike EXPO** - Continue to hold The Villages Bike EXPO and expand its size and scope. This event has been held annually since 2012 and draws more than 600 attendees. Sponsored by The Villages Community Development Districts' Recreation Department, Bike EXPO focuses solely on cycling in and around The Villages, with displays by local cycling clubs, public safety officials, cycling related tour vendors and health focused organizations. The Bike EXPO is been scheduled to precede the Hearts for Our Hospital Bicycle Challenge to make the Big Bike Weekend of attention and activities for cyclists and potential cyclists as well as opportunities to educate the general public.
- **Charity Rides** - Continue to sponsor charity rides that draw hundreds of riders throughout the area, including one in the spring (We Bike for Kids) and one in the fall (Hearts for Our Hospital Bicycle Challenge / Big Bike Weekend). In 2015, the H4H ride involved 200 riders and raised \$30,000, while the 2016 ride had 313 riders and \$40,000 raised. The commitment for 2017 is an additional \$250,000, for a total commitment of \$325,000.for The Villages Regional Hospital Auxiliary Foundation over the next few years. Expand and publicize the health fair portion of the event throughout the entire community, plan new educational seminars for the Bike Expo and educational materials to be distributed.
- **Outdoor EXPO** - Continue to participate in the Outdoor EXPO organized by the Recreation Department, a two-day event featuring clubs and businesses that cater to residents' outdoor interests. Plan for educational seminars and distribution of educational materials at this event.



Figure 40: Bike EXPO

- **Girl Scout Camp Support** - Continue to work with Camp Wildwood, a regional Girl Scout camp located near The Villages. For more than 12 years, the camp has provided a friendly rest stop for group rides and charity rides. The cyclists have reciprocated by donating money, bicycles, camp signs and benches, performing camp maintenance including painting, fixing bicycles and constructing a horse shelter. Explore new opportunities for LCIs and other volunteers to provide cycling educational programs for campers. See Appendix 19.
- **Bike Month Events** - Expand on the two special Bike Month rides that were held in 2016. Plan to host, sponsor and encourage a greater variety of bicycle-themed events and programs for Bike Month in upcoming years; check bikeleague.org/bikemonth for ideas. Consider organizing “Bike to Your Recreation Center” events (where other communities have “Bike to Work” events) in coordination with the Recreation Department.
- **Tandem Bike Rally** - Continue to host the annual regional tandem bike rally run by the PANTHERS tandem club, based at the Waterfront Inn. More than 50 couples from across the U.S. and Canada have attended this high-visibility cycling event each year since 2009.
- **Bike Rodeo** - Consider organizing a ‘Ciclovía’ or Bike Rodeo type event, possibly in conjunction with the fund-raising event at The Villages Charter School stadium.
- **Bicycle Friendly Businesses** - Continue efforts to encourage local businesses to promote cycling to their employees and customers and to seek recognition through the LAB’s Bicycle Friendly Business program. As of 2016, three businesses have received recognition and four others are in the process of preparing applications. Work with the LAB to gain recognition for businesses in and around this community where bicycle

commuting for employees is not a realistic option, instead recognizing their valuable contributions through sponsorship of special events, participation in bike expos and health fairs, provision of bike club rest stops, accommodation of cycling customers, and other support of the cycling community.

- **Sheriff's Bicycle Drive** - Continue this yearly drive to collect unwanted bicycles from Villagers and surrounding neighbors. The Village Bike Club has organized this annual drive for many years, and members of all of the bike clubs and other volunteers evaluate, clean and repair the donated bicycles and give them to the Sumter County Sheriff's Department for distribution throughout the area to those who could not otherwise afford a bike. In 2015, more than 325 bicycles were donated and rehabilitated.



Figure 41: Sheriff's Bicycle Drive

- **Media Coverage** - Enlist reporters from all local media to carry stories about events, charitable activities and cycling personalities to raise interest and encourage more cycling among both novice and experienced cyclists (examples in Appendix 16 and 21).
- **The Villages App** – In addition to the paper map of multi-modal paths and roads with cart/bike lanes (available free at all sales centers in The Villages – see Appendix 10), encourage cyclists to use The Villages App, a free smartphone app that provides navigation to any destination in The Villages using either roads or multi-modal paths (See Appendix 6). The app is kept up to date and has a variety of other useful information as well as very detailed maps that can be viewed at any scale.
- **Other Route Mapping Resources** – publicize the available resources for ride maps and help newcomers become familiar with the area where any direction they head will be a great bike ride. The bike clubs maintain collections of favorite routes for group rides and many riders use apps such as Ride with GPS or Map My Ride to record additional routes. Dozens of cue sheets, with maps, for rides in and around The Villages are available at on the Sumter Landing Bicycle Club website; see Appendix 2. Cyclists can

also use Google Maps that contains biking trails and directions for all of The Villages and the surrounding area.

- **Adopt-a-Highway Program** - Continue participation in this program as a public service. The signs noting bike club clean-up activities on a busy road help to build a positive image for cyclists.



Figure 42: Adopt-a-Highway program

- **Image and Public Relations** – Recognize that many non-cyclists consider bicycle riders a nuisance, which can result in dangerous incidents. Use every ride as an opportunity to demonstrate courtesy and friendliness, as well as lawful behavior and caution. Sponsor and participate in public service activities that help to build a positive image for cyclists in The Villages.

E. Evaluation

Goal: Evaluate progress toward the goals of Cycling The Villages on a regular basis and advocate for cyclists' needs as the area continues to grow in the future.

- **Data Collection and Analysis** - Collect and analyze crash report data, results from bike questions in the TV Annual Survey, incident reports from the bike clubs' websites and other data sources that may be developed through implementation of the Bicycle Plan. Report conclusions to the appropriate staff or agencies.
- **Annual Review and Updating** - Establish a review process that provides annual evaluation of the goals, needs and recommendations, noting progress and making additions or deletions as needed.

- **Bicycle Usage and Trip Targets** - The 2017 Annual Survey of residents will contain the first questions on bicycle usage. Until now, no reliable way has existed to estimate total bicycle usage and trip targets. The Group hopes that cycling questions will be included in this survey each year so that trends can be observed and evaluated.
- **Advocacy for Bicycles in the Surrounding Area** – Continue participation in the Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and seek other opportunities to advocate for bicycle facilities as the surrounding area. Monitor changes to the comprehensive plans of the three counties and three municipalities (see Appendix 3), and meet with the appropriate entities if proposed changes appear to affect cyclists or cycling facilities.
- **Costs and Funding** - At this point, The Villages has no identified needs for outside funding since the infrastructure is complete and residential bonds, maintenance fees and amenity fees support infrastructure maintenance and recreation programs. Future funding might become desirable as bicycling interests and opportunities present themselves. Funding sources for cycling-related projects will be monitored through the Group’s participation in the Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.



Figure 43 Silver Level Bicycle Friendly Community

IX. Appendices

- Appendix 1. [The Villages Recreation Master Plan](#)
- Appendix 2. [List of Bike Clubs with Descriptions](#)
- Appendix 3. [Area Planning Documents Related to Cycling](#)
- Appendix 4. [Response to LAB Silver Award Report Card and Feedback \(Checklist\)](#)
- Appendix 5. [Summary of Cycling Guidelines from Section V](#)
- Appendix 6. [The Villages App](#)
- Appendix 7. [Navigating Roundabouts Brochure](#)
- Appendix 8. [NHTSA Safe Cycling for Adults](#)
- Appendix 9. [List of Bike Shops with Descriptions](#)
- Appendix 10. [Map of MMPs and Roads with Cart/Bike Lanes](#)
- Appendix 11. [Nearby Bicycle Trails](#)
- Appendix 12. [Survey of Bicycling Community](#)
- Appendix 13. [Florida Bicycle Association Club of the Year Award](#)
- Appendix 14. [Coast-to-Coast Connector Trail](#)
- Appendix 15. [Safety Tips Card](#)
- Appendix 16. [Newspaper Articles on Cycling](#)
- Appendix 17. [Law Enforcement Guidebook](#)
- Appendix 18. [Bike-Mounted Video Cameras Article](#)
- Appendix 19. [Camp Wildwood Girl Scout initiatives](#)
- Appendix 20. [League of American Bicyclists Bicycle Friendly America Five E's](#)
- Appendix 21. [Newspaper Article on Bicycle Laws](#)
- Appendix 22. [Bike Friendly Advocacy Group Charter](#)
- Appendix 23. [Florida's Bicycle Laws](#)