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Walkability and Bikability in Montour Falls, New York: Recommendations from a Comprehensive Plan

Chelsea Reome
Binghamton University–SUNY

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Recommendations from a Comprehensive Plan
Chelsea Reome, Department of Public Administration
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Village of Montour Falls
- Located in Schuyler County
- Land area: 3 square miles
- 2014 population: 1,932
- Density: 644 people per square mile
- Median Household Income: $34,803
- Median Age: 50.5 years
- Began the comprehensive planning process in 2015 with Southern Tier Central Regional Planning & Development Board

Importance of Walkability & Bikability in Montour Falls
Walkability and bikability describe how friendly or conducive a place is to walking and biking, respectively. Montour Falls, they will:
- Maintain small town environment
- Enhance connectivity within the Finger Lakes Region via the Catharine Valley Trail
- Provide low-cost transportation options for low-income individuals
- Facilitate aging in place for senior residents

Methods
Data for recommendations came from four different sources
- Resident survey
- American Community Survey (ACS)
- Resources and Best Practices
- Steering Committee Input

Writing recommendations was an iterative process
- June-August: developed and administered resident survey tool
- September-October: analyzed resident survey data
- October-March: collected and analyzed ACS data, located resources and best practices, and received steering committee input on proposed recommendations
- April-May: data and feedback from all sources incorporated

Resident Survey
- How would you like to see sidewalk maintenance change in the village?
  - I think this service is good as it is: 22%
  - I think this service should be scaled back: 1%
  - I would pay more taxes for this service to be added or improved: 1%
- For the next 5 years, would you like to see speed calming on South Genesee Street?
  - Yes: 45%
  - No: 13%
  - No opinion: 13%
  - Blank: 19%

Top 5 Traffic-related Complaints
- Traffic and congestion due to buses and cars of people parked to see Shequaga Falls on S. Genesee Street: 5
- Noise from trucks and motorcycles traveling through the village: 4
- Speeding cars on S. Genesee Street: 3
- Trucks on Route 14 are noisy and shake buildings: 3

American Community Survey
- Vehicles Available per Household, 2014
  - No vehicles available: 4
  - 1 vehicle available: 22
  - 3 or more vehicles available: 2

Commute Time to Work, 2014
- Less than 10 min: 26%
- 10-14 min: 16%
- 15-29 min: 22%
- 30-44 min: 7%
- 45-59 min: 6%
- 60 or more min: 1%

Resources & Best Practices
Many New York State and federal programs guide and fund local-level walking and biking initiatives. Plan recommends that Montour Falls apply for funding from these programs:
- Complete Streets Program (NYSDOT)
- Transportation Enhancement Program (NYS)
- Other municipalities have implemented programs and infrastructure to remedy problems similar to those faced by Montour Falls.
- Southern Tier Bike League (STBL) operates a bike share with locations in Elmira and Watkins Glen, which can expand to include a site in Montour Falls.

Steering Committee Input
Composed of Village Board members, Planning Board members and residents.
Used local expertise to:
- Interpret survey results (e.g. pinpointed where traffic-calming measures were needed)
- Advocate for recommendations that supported CVT use and connectivity (e.g. bike share)

Recommendations
- Make streetscape improvements that promote walkability and accessibility in the downtown
  - Walkable downtowns are socially and economically beneficial.
  - Fit sidewalks with curb cuts and truncated domes facing crosswalks.
  - Amenities like street trees and public art enhance sensory experience
  - Pursue Complete Streets funding (NYSDOT) to make improvements.

- Introduce traffic calming measures on South Genesee Street
  - Speeding cars are dangerous for pedestrians.
  - Crosswalks at the intersection of W. Main Street and S. Genesee Street are not adequate.
  - Measures such as speed tables can be installed elsewhere to reduce automobile speed.

- Implement infrastructure that improves bicycle safety and connections to CVT
  - Improve bicyclist safety by painting bike lanes or “sharrows” on the roadway
  - Install more signage directing bicyclists (and pedestrians) to CVT to increase connectivity to the region, and provide bicyclists and pedestrians safe transportation routes.
  - Pursue Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP) to make improvements.

- Establish a bike share in the village
  - Expand STBL bike share by adding location in Montour Falls.
  - Low-cost and reliable form of transportation for residents.
  - Could increase use of CVT by tourists.