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

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Recommendations from a Comprehensive Plan
Chelsea Reome, Department of Public Administration
Spring 2016

**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. In 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

**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.

**Resident Survey**
- How would you like to see sidewalk maintenance change in the village?
  - I think this service is good the way 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%
  - I’d like to see this service added or improved, but I wouldn’t be able to pay more taxes for it: 45%
  - Other: 1%
  - Blank: 19%

**American Community Survey**
- Commute Time to Work, 2014
  - Less than 10 min: 54%
  - 10-14 min: 15%
  - 15-29 min: 13%
  - 30-44 min: 7%
  - 45-59 min: 1%
  - 60 or more min: 1%

- Vehicles Available per Household, 2014
  - No vehicles available: 1%
  - 1 vehicle available: 9%
  - 2 vehicles available: 30%
  - 3 or more vehicles available: 60%

**Top 5 Traffic-related Complaints**
- Traffic and congestion due to buses and cars of people parked at 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

**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 tree 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.