

TOWN OF BLUFF

# ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

September 2023

Prepared for the Town of Bluff  
by Bike Utah



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Active Transportation Master Plan was developed by Bike Utah with input and support from Bluff officials and residents.

## **Bluff Mayor and Town Council**

Ann Leppanen, Mayor

Luanne Hook

Brant Murray

James Sayers

Linda Sosa

## **Bluff Active Transportation Advisory Committee**

Molly Schmidt

Luanne Hook

James Sayers

Deborah Westfall

Anthony Lott

## **Bluff Planning & Zoning Commission**

Amanda Podmore, Chair

Marcia Hadenfeldt

Ed Dobson

Malia Collins

Brian Whitney

## **Bike Utah**

Chris Wiltsie

Cameron Carter

Ally Padgen

Special thanks to members of the public who provided input through open houses, online surveys, community events, and other channels.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1: Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>1</b>
How to Use This Plan	
Definitions	
Introduction	
Vision	
Goals	
<b>2: Public Engagement.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3: Existing Conditions.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Existing Facilities	
Bluff River Trail	
Collision and Safety Analysis	
Connectivity Analysis	
<b>4: Ecological Considerations.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Biological Soils	
Sensitive Lands	
Animal Collision Mitigation Strategies	
Trail Planning on Federal Lands	
Green Infrastructure	
<b>5: Design Standards.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Neighborhood Byway	
Multi-Use Path	
Pedestrian Crossings	
Traffic Calming	
UDOT Standards	
<b>6: Facility Recommendations.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Main Street	
Highway 191 Bridge	
Mission Road	
Pedestrian Crossings & Bridge Improvements	
Highway 191 and Highway 162	
Neighborhood Byway	
3rd West	
East-West Connecting Trail	
Bluff Bench Road	
Five Points Trail	
Montezuma Creek Connection	

## 7: Implementation Plan.....34

Next Steps	
Regional Coordination	
Community Integration and Programming	
Planned Roadway Construction and Maintenance	
Project Prioritization	
Cost Estimates	
Funding Sources	

## 8: References.....47

### LIST OF MAPS

Bluff River Trail.....	7
Crashes & Average Daily Traffic.....	8
Speed Limit.....	8
Bluff Main Street Area, Connectivity Index.....	9
Bluff Elementary Travelshed, Pedestrian vs Vehicle.....	10
Bluff Elementary Travelshed, Current vs Without Ped. Barriers.....	11
Landcover, Sensitive Lands.....	14
Crashes Involving An Animal.....	16
Land Ownership.....	18
Map 1: Bluff Region - Active Transportation Plan.....	25
Map 2: Bluff Town Center - Active Transportation Plan.....	26
Pedestrian Crossings & Bridge Improvements.....	29
West Neighborhood Byway.....	31
East Neighborhood Byway.....	31
East-West Connecting Trail & 3rd West.....	32
Bluff Bench Road.....	33

### LIST OF TABLES

Bluff Connectivity Analysis (Bluff Main Street Area).....	10
Bluff Connectivity Analysis (Bluff - Entire Region).....	11
Landcover Types.....	14-15
Animal Collision Mitigation Strategies.....	17
Project Prioritization (within Bluff).....	38
Project Prioritization (regional connections).....	39
Cost Estimates.....	40
Federal Funding Sources.....	43
State Funding Sources.....	45
Local Funding Sources.....	46

# 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## How to Use This Plan

This active transportation plan provides high-level recommendations that allow for a safe and comfortable local network of walking and biking facilities. Specifically, it includes support and direction for the Town of Bluff to add new facilities for people walking, biking, etc. Additionally, policy and programmatic recommendations are provided that would influence land-use and other aspects of (re)development related to active transportation.

This document includes an overview of the initial stakeholder and community engagement undertaken to understand the vision and goals of the community. The resulting analyses and recommendations are available in the subsequent chapters.

During funding seeking and implementation phasing, Bluff staff and community members are encouraged to use this document to steer priorities, refresh on public sentiment, and use this as a guide as the community grows and relevant decisions are made.

An active transportation plan is an essential first step in developing and constructing active transportation facilities. By adopting an active transportation plan, Bluff will gain access to Federal and State active transportation funding grants that would otherwise be unavailable.

## Definitions

**Active Transportation:** Refers to human-powered modes of transportation, such as walking or cycling, that promote physical activity and reduce reliance on motor vehicles.

**Ecology:** The study of the relationships between organisms and their environment, focusing on the interactions and interdependencies within ecosystems.

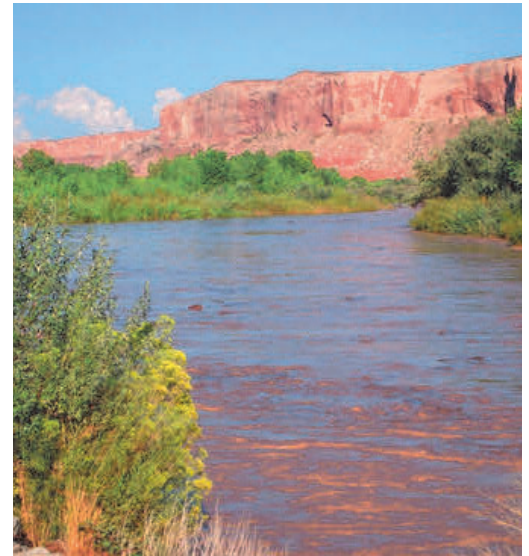
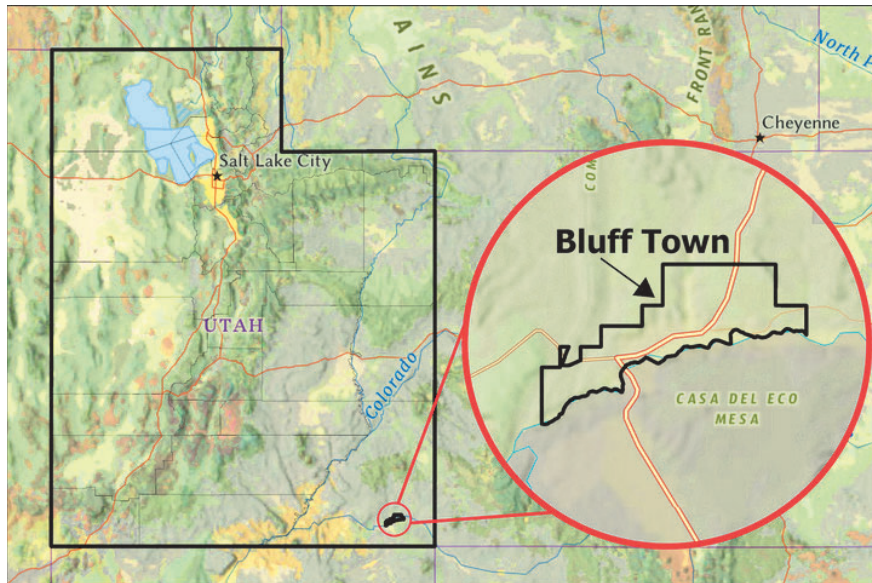
**Form-Based Code:** A type of zoning regulation that emphasizes the physical form and design of buildings and public spaces, aiming to create more walkable, mixed-use communities.

**Land Use:** The way land is utilized or allocated for different purposes, such as residential, commercial, industrial, or recreational activities.

**Green Infrastructure:** Natural or engineered systems, including parks, green spaces, bioswales, and other vegetated features, designed to manage stormwater, enhance biodiversity, improve air quality, mitigate urban heat island effects, and provide recreational and aesthetic benefits while promoting ecological sustainability.

## Introduction

Bluff is a small town located in San Juan County, in the southeastern corner of Utah. The town is situated at the base of the magnificent Comb Ridge, surrounded by stunning red rock formations of the Bears Ears National Monument. The San Juan River, located on the southern edge of town, provides a critical source of water, recreation, and beauty for the community.



*San Juan River (2022)*

Bluff has a population of around 250 people, making it one of the smallest communities in Utah. It is known for its rich history and cultural heritage, with a number of historic sites and landmarks located throughout the area. Bluff has a long and fascinating history, including a significant Native American presence dating back thousands of years, as well as a history of settlement by Mormon pioneers in the late 1800s.

In recent years, Bluff has become a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts, with a range of recreational opportunities available in the surrounding area. The town is home to a number of popular hiking and camping areas, prehistoric rock art sites, and BLM's Sand Island, a campground with a busy boat launch for private and commercial raft trips on the San Juan River. As the town grows and develops, it is important to prioritize active transportation options to ensure that residents and visitors can safely and conveniently explore all that Bluff has to offer.



*Bluff Fort (Mays, 2015)*



*Bears Ears National Monument (Visit Utah, n.d)*

## Vision

We envision a vibrant community where all residents and visitors can enjoy convenient and sustainable modes of transportation. We value safety, connectivity, and the natural beauty of our landscapes. Through an extensive network of paths and trails, we hope to promote active living, environmental stewardship, and a strong sense of community.

## Goals

### Safety:

Develop a comprehensive active transportation network that prioritizes safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Implement measures such as multi-use paths, safe crossings, reduced speed limits, and well-marked signage to ensure safe passage for individuals of all ages and abilities.

### Sustainability:

Encourage environmentally conscious transportation choices by promoting walking, biking, and other low-carbon alternatives to reduce local vehicle traffic. Highlight the environmental benefits of active transportation, including reduced emissions and a healthier ecosystem.

### Connectivity:

Foster connectivity within Bluff and surrounding communities by establishing well-connected trails, pathways, and bike routes. Enhance connectivity between west and east Bluff and across Highway 191, creating a seamless network that promotes neighborly interactions and community cohesion.



*Bluff Town (Mays, 2015)*



*Bluff Elementary School (Boyle, 2021)*



*Paved trail in St. George (DeMille, 2022)*

### Accessibility:

Enhance accessibility throughout the active transportation network by incorporating amenities such as restrooms, benches, and ample parking facilities. Prioritize clear and comprehensive trail information to ensure easy navigation. Design a functional, balanced, inclusive environment that promotes convenient access for all community members.

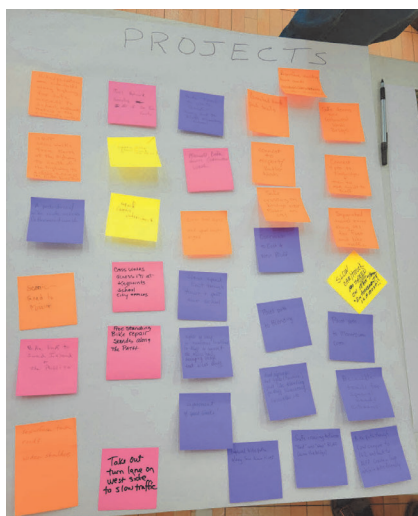
### Aesthetics:

Create a scenic and attractive active transportation network that harmonizes with the natural surroundings, featuring elements such as trees, native plants, art installations, and stamped or concrete paths. Enhance existing roads for safety and comfort, while still preserving the rural charm of our streets.

## 2: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

This Active Transportation Plan was developed with extensive community engagement. We held one public workshop and open house, one policy-maker workshop, monthly stakeholder meetings, and two focus groups with targeted community members to gather feedback and ensure that the plan reflects the needs and desires of Bluff residents. These meetings allowed community members to express their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions regarding active transportation in the town.

Several core values emerged during these public engagement activities. These values shaped the vision statement and goals for this plan, and served as guiding principles for the development of policy recommendations.



**Safety** emerged as a top priority among the comments we received. Residents emphasized the importance of creating a safe environment for all users, particularly vulnerable road users including pedestrians and cyclists. They highlighted the need for comprehensive trail networks and pathways separate from high-speed vehicle traffic that prioritizes safety and comfortability for road users of all ages and abilities. Suggestions included the provision of wider shoulders on streets and roads, dedicated bike lanes, safe crossings, and reduced speed limits throughout the town.

**Connectivity** was another key theme expressed by Bluff residents. They emphasized the importance of connecting the west and east sides of town, as well as establishing connections with surrounding communities. The desire to foster neighborly and connected communities was evident in the comments. Residents highlighted the benefits of active transportation in promoting inclusivity, family recreation, and community buy-in. They suggested creating intense connected community biking paths and mountain biking trails that cater to different age groups and interests.

**Accessibility** and **convenience** were also significant considerations. Residents expressed a preference for replacing local vehicle traffic with walking and biking, thus reducing congestion and environmental harms from vehicle usage. They also emphasized the importance of ensuring ADA accessibility and addressing the needs of elderly and differently-abled individuals, highlighting the commitment to accessibility. To supplement this, they called for clear signage, well-marked lanes, and convenient amenities such as bike repair shops, restrooms, benches, and parking facilities. They also underscored the importance of transparent trail information and preserving the rural appeal of certain residential streets throughout town.

**Sustainability** emerged as a core value expressed by Bluff residents throughout the public outreach process and in existing town plans. The community demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving the natural beauty and environmental well-being of the town. By embracing sustainable practices, residents hope to create an active transportation network that not only benefits the well-being of its residents and visitors but also contributes to the long-term ecological resilience and vitality of the town.

**Aesthetics** were another key consideration expressed by Bluff residents. Community feedback highlighted a strong desire for scenic pathways that harmoniously blend with the natural surroundings and enhance the aesthetic appeal of the town. Residents expressed interest in incorporating elements of nature along the trails, such as trees, native plants, art installations, and stamped or concrete paths. Additionally, residents emphasized the importance of enhancing existing town roads, widening shoulders outside of the city, and utilizing rights of way to connect various trailheads and key locations.



In summary, the public outreach process highlighted the community's strong desire for an active transportation plan that prioritizes safety, connectivity, accessibility, and aesthetics. The input received during this process has been invaluable in shaping the Active Transportation Plan for Bluff, ensuring that it reflects the needs and aspirations of the residents. The plan will serve as a roadmap for the development of a comprehensive and inclusive active transportation network that enhances the liveability and vibrancy of the town.

### 3: EXISTING CONDITIONS

The current Bluff General Plan was developed in 2019. This plan outlines the core values and goals for the community. Residents place high value on their quality of life, sense of community, and connection to nature. As the city develops, residents hope to preserve the quiet, rural atmosphere of the town, the historic and prehistoric elements of their history, and the scenic natural environment that surrounds the community (Bluff General Plan, 2019).

As of 2018, there are 18.1 miles of municipality-owned (Class C) roads in Bluff, 41% of which are paved, 33% are gravel, and 26% are dirt. These roads are maintained by the town. Despite significant annual state funding for maintenance, decades of neglect have created poor road conditions and a backlog of necessary road improvements across Bluff. In addition to Class C roads, there are 68.3 miles of Class D roads which are not maintained by Bluff and often require four-wheel drive to access.

Bluff currently has very little active transportation infrastructure, making it challenging for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate the town safely and comfortably. Most streets lack pedestrian sidewalks, bike lanes, or adequate shoulder space, causing many residents to travel through informal residence and business setbacks to get around. Trailhead access and connectivity is also an issue for non-motorized road users.

