

Chapter 2. Background Information

2.1 History of Sidewalks

Some of the oldest paths and trails in Forsyth County are located in the earliest settlements; Bethabara, Bethania and Salem. Bethabara, established in 1753, was the first Moravian settlement in North Carolina. On December 27, 1757, the first burial occurred in God's Acre in Bethabara. This is the first established walking path in Bethabara, from the settlement to the burial grounds. Other paths in the settlement included one from the Mill Site to the Stranger's graveyard and the path to the Mill Site itself. Other significantly traveled paths in the area included the Great Wagon Road passing very near Bethabara and the Old Plank Road which passed through downtown Winston-Salem. Bethabara never had formal sidewalks; they simply used worn dirt paths. (interview with Ellen Kutcher, 5/4/2006).

Salem was founded in 1766 by Moravians from the settlements of Bethabara and Bethania. The earliest reference to sidewalks in Salem occurs on 1 September 1801, "The Sisters desire that their entrance to the Church is paved, because the path is very bad incase of rain. Bricks would serve as the cleanest pavement." (*Aufseher Collegium* minutes). Hard firing of brick was not common until after the American Revolution. Prior to the Revolution, it is unlikely that brick was used as a paving material. By the mid-nineteenth century, brick was the preferred sidewalk paving material although there is evidence of stone and dirt walkways.

Sidewalks were a common feature in housing developments prior to World War II. Unfortunately, during the building boom of the 1940s and 1950s, sidewalk construction in housing developments came to a virtual halt. During the late 1980s and early 1990s,



Figure 6: Sidewalk in Old Salem



Figure 7: Historic Photograph of Old Salem

sidewalks started making a limited appearance in the new housing development areas.

2.2 Location and Demographics

The Winston-Salem Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) lies in the Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina. It is located about one and a half hours west of Raleigh and about one and a half hours north of Charlotte. It consists of four counties, all of Forsyth County, northern Davidson County, northeast Davie County, and southern Stokes County. Within those counties in the MPO, there are twelve municipalities; Bethania, Bermuda Run, Clemmons, Kernersville, King, Lewisville, Midway, Rural Hall, Tobaccoville, Walkertown, Wallburg and Winston-Salem. The MPO encompasses 335,853 acres with a combined population of 346,036. The area's economic history is in the tobacco and textile industries but more recently has migrated to more of a banking and medical research economy. There are also two major universities, Winston-Salem State University and Wake Forest University, and two major hospitals, Forsyth Memorial Hospital and Baptist Medical Center in the MPO. The table to the left, based on 2000 US census data, shows the racial makeup of the MPO.

Table 1 Demographics

Winston-Salem Urban Area MPO Demographics		
	Population	Percent
Multirace	2,925	1
Asian	3,251	1
Hispanic or Latino	20,159	6
Black	78,083	23
White	240,247	69
Total	346,036	100

It is important to look at the demographic characteristics of who is living in the MPO in order to create a plan that appropriately addresses needs. The following discussion assesses the MPO's population in comparison to the state. When working with pedestrian related issues, it is important that the discussion assess characteristics such as age, income and commuting.

Race. The Winston-Salem Urban Area MPO has a racially diverse population with 69 percent of the population Caucasian (North Carolina 72 percent), 23 percent of the population African American (North Carolina 21 percent), 6 percent of the population Hispanic or Latino (North Carolina 4.7 percent) and 1 percent of the population Asian

(North Carolina 1 percent). The MPO reflects the trends of the state of North Carolina in terms of racial makeup.

Age. The median age for the Winston-Salem Urban Area MPO is 36 years old with the state and nation average at 35.3 years old. This high median age may be attributed to the large medical field population. Those aged 5 and under represent 7 percent and those 65 and over represent 12 percent of the population. The state average for those over 65 is 21 percent.

Vehicle Ownership. In the Winston-Salem Urban Area MPO, 8.6 percent of households have no vehicle and 34.4 percent have one vehicle. Both of these rates are similar to the state (7.5 percent no vehicles and 32.3 percent one vehicle). At the same time, the MPO has similar rates of two vehicles per household (38 percent) as those of the state (39 percent).

Work Commute. The Winston-Salem Urban Area MPO's work commute for workers 16 years and over may be reflective of its vehicle ownership. The MPO has 80 percent of workers 16 years and older that travel to work by car while the state average is 79 percent. Reflecting vehicle ownership, 1.5 percent of the MPO's workers take public transit (1 percent state) and 1.9 percent walked to work (1.9 percent state).

This statistical information shows that the Winston-Salem Urban Area MPO is full of pedestrians – from lower income populations that can not afford cars and the elderly who no longer drive, to medical professionals that walk to work and students walking to school.

2.3 Injury Analysis

The issue of safety is one of the most important aspects of planning and constructing pedestrian facilities. Sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities give the pedestrian a safer place to walk other than in the street. The data in Table 2a shows that in Forsyth



Figure 8: Crosswalk

County alone from 2000 to 2004 there were a total of 436 crashes that involved a pedestrian; resulting in 35 deaths. The table also shows injury type, no injury, or unknown. Forsyth County over the five years averaged 7 deaths per year. According to the National Safety Council, approximately 5,900 pedestrians are killed by automobiles every year nationally with 84,000 suffering nonfatal injuries. Almost one-third of these victims are children under the age of 15 yet they represent only about 15% of the U.S. population.

Table 2a Winston-Salem Urban Area MPO Injury Data from 2000 to 2004

Injury	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Totals
Fatality	8	4	12	5	6	35
Disabling Injury	9	10	9	9	10	47
Evident Injury	14	25	30	39	40	148
Possible Injury	22	31	47	29	42	171
No Injury	2	7	3	5	5	22
Unknown	3	2	3	4	1	13
Totals	58	79	104	91	104	436
<i>Counts are of pedestrians.</i>						

All of the data in both Table 2a and 2b has been obtained from the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center.

Table 2b shows the age of the pedestrian compared to the type of injury sustained for Forsyth County from 2000 to 2004. As you can see Forsyth County has fared somewhat better than the national average when trying to keep our children safe when walking. About 20 percent of the total pedestrian injuries occurred in children age 15 or younger compared to about 33 percent nationally.

Table 2b Winston-Salem Urban Area MPO Pedestrian Crash Data from 2000 to 2004 by age

Age Grouped	Fatality	Disabling Injury	Evident Injury	Possible Injury	No Injury	Unknown	Total
0 - 5	3	3	7	6	1	1	21
6-10	1	2	17	10	2	2	34
11-15	1	1	17	13	1	0	33
16-20	2	2	16	18	4	1	43
21-25	1	6	13	11	3	0	34
26-30	1	2	7	13	1	1	25
31-40	3	8	25	39	5	2	82
41-50	5	9	21	26	1	2	64
51-60	5	5	11	16	3	1	41
61-70	4	3	6	11	1	1	26
>70	9	6	6	7	0	0	28
Unknown	0	0	2	1	0	2	5
Total	35	47	148	171	22	13	436

There are many issues that affect crash data. One can be the under reporting of accidents, which may happen when the people involved in an accident may not wish to involve government officials. This is often the case with high populations of minorities or recent immigrants to the United States. In addition, many pedestrian related incidents are not reported because the resulting property damage cost is relatively low compared to vehicle on vehicle crashes, so the parties involved decide not to contact the authorities. While it is important to commend the Winston-Salem Urban Area MPO for its relatively low crash statistics, it is also important to recognize that these may not be entirely accurate and that improvements to local pedestrian facilities are still critical and necessary.