



**BICYCLE FRIENDLY
COMMUNITY**

BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY FEEDBACK REPORT

Spring 2013



Photo: Trek

Topeka, KS

The Bicycle Friendly Community review committee was impressed with the growing commitment to make **Topeka** a great place for bicyclists. The **Honorable Mention** given by the reviewers reflects their view that some of the key building blocks of creating a Bicycle Friendly Community are in place.

Particular **highlights** were the Complete Streets policy, the Bikeways Master Plan, the off-road path network, Bike Month activities, National Bike Challenge participation, cycling events and the work of the Topeka Community Cycle Project, the Kaw Valley Bicycle Club, and the Bikeways Plan Committee.

Reviewers were very pleased to see the current efforts and dedication to make Topeka a great place for cyclists.

Below, reviewers provided key recommendations to further promote bicycling in Topeka and a menu of additional pro-cycling measures that can be implemented in the short and long term. We strongly encourage you to use this feedback to build on your momentum and improve your community for bicyclists. There may also be initiatives, programs, and facilities that are not mentioned here that would benefit your bicycling culture, so please continue to try new things to increase your ridership, safety, and awareness!

To learn more about what funds are available for bicycle projects, use Advocacy Advance's interactive [Find it, Fund it tool](#) to search for eligible **funding** programs by bike/ped project type or review the same information as a PDF [here](#).

The key measures Topeka should take to improve cycling:

- Ensure that the standards for bike parking conform to [APBP guidelines](#).
- Increase the amount of [high quality bicycle parking](#) at popular destinations such as major transit stops, schools, universities, recreational and entertainment facilities, retail stores, office buildings, and churches throughout the community. Residents of multi-family dwellings and public housing should have access to high quality bike parking as well. Regulations that require bike parking, e.g. for new developments, can secure private funding. See the bicycle parking ordinances of [Madison, Wisconsin](#) and [Santa Cruz, California](#). Also consider adding some [artistic bike racks](#) to enhance the sense of place of your community.
- Continue to expand the bike network and to increase network connectivity through the use of different types of [bike lanes](#), [cycle tracks](#) and [shared lane arrows](#). On-street improvements coupled with the expansion of the off-street system [will encourage more people to cycle](#) and will improve safety. Ensure smooth transitions for bicyclists between the trail network and the street network. These improvements will also increase the effectiveness of encouragement efforts by providing a broader range of facility choices for users of various abilities and comfort levels. Specific hazards and

Benefits of Further Improving Topeka for Cycling

infrastructure issues that should be addressed immediately include:

- 15th & Landon Trail: Trail ends approximately 10ft before the street
 - 21st & Fillmore: Trail makes a 90 degree turn right at an intersection
 - 37th & Fairlawn: Road and curb area have separated enough that a bicycle tire could slip into the crack
 - Huntoon near McAlister: Drainage on roadway is very dangerous to cyclists
 - Shunga Trail at 29th & Randolph: Trail should be extended south and merge into a roadway for safer access
 - 10th Street Bridge needs Curb cutouts at both ends of the bridge to allow safer crossing over the bridge on south side. The north side needs spur from path to street for access and curb cut to street.
- It is essential to make both motorists and cyclists aware of their rights and responsibilities on the road. Continue to expand your public education campaign promoting the share the road message. Take advantage of your local bicycle groups for content development and manpower. See the excellent [“Look”](#) campaign in New York City or the [“Don’t be a Road Hog”](#) campaign in Colorado.
 - Offer Cycling Skills classes, Traffic Skills 101 classes and bike commuter classes more frequently.
 - Bicycle-safety education should be a routine part of public education, and schools and the surrounding

Further increasing bicycle use can **improve the environment** by reducing the impact on residents of pollution and noise, limiting greenhouse gases, and improving the quality of public spaces; **Reduce congestion** by shifting short trips (the majority of trips in cities) out of cars. This will also make cities more accessible for public transport, walking, essential car travel, emergency services, and deliveries; **Save lives** by creating safer conditions for bicyclists and as a direct consequence improve the safety of all other road users. [Research shows](#) that increasing the number of bicyclists on the street improves bicycle safety; **Increase opportunities** for residents of all ages to participate socially and economically in the community, regardless of income or ability.

Greater choice of travel modes also increases independence, especially among [seniors](#) and [children](#); **Boost the economy** by creating a community that is an attractive destination for new residents, tourists and businesses; **Enhance recreational opportunities**, especially for children, and further contribute to the quality of life in the community; **Save city funds** by increasing the efficient use of public space, reducing the need for costly new road infrastructure, preventing crashes, improving the health of the community, and increasing the use of public transport; **Enhance public safety and security** by increasing the number of “eyes on the street” and providing more options for movement in the event of emergencies, natural disasters, and major public events; **Improve the health and well being** of the population by promoting routine physical activity.

neighborhoods should be particularly safe and convenient for biking. Work with your Bicycle Advisory Committee, local bicycle groups or interested parents to develop and implement a Safe Routes to School or equivalent program that emphasize bicycling for all elementary schools, middle schools and high schools. For more information, see the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Safe Routes To School Toolkit](#) or visit www.saferoutesinfo.org.

- Ask police officers to target both motorist and cyclist infractions to ensure that laws are being followed by all road users. Ensure that bicycle/car crashes are investigated thoroughly and that citations are given fairly.

Menu of additional recommendations to further promote bicycling:

Engineering

Low hanging fruit and fast results

- Develop and implement streetscape design guidelines that foster a pleasant and comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Beautiful streetscaping has also shown to increase community livability and pride, reduce crime and increase property values.

- Offer more [ongoing training](#) opportunities on accommodating bicyclists for engineering and planning staff.
- Consider passing an ordinance or policy that would require larger employers to provide shower facilities and other end-of-trip amenities.
- Promote active transportation by reducing traffic speeds. Consider lowering the speed limit to 25 mph or lower on non-arterial roads, especially in denser areas, around schools and shopping centers, and in neighborhoods. Use traffic calming measures and low speed design principles to achieve higher compliance rates. Speed [has been identified](#) as a key risk factor in road traffic injuries, influencing both the risk of a road traffic crash as well as the severity of the injuries that result from crashes. For instance, pedestrians and cyclists have a 90% chance of survival if hit by a car travelling at a speed of 20 mph or below, but less than a 50% chance of surviving an impact of 30 mph or above. [Studies](#) also generally report a positive association between traffic safety (perceived and/or measured) and walking and cycling, particularly among women.
- Implement [road diets](#) in appropriate locations to make streets more efficient and safe. Use the newly created space for bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

- Install a [bicycle wayfinding system](#) at strategic locations around the community.
- Implement broader transportation policies and programs that encourage alternative transportation choices, such as maximum/no minimum car parking standards, to complement your community's infrastructure investments and programs.
- Adequately maintain your on and off road bicycle infrastructure to ensure usability and safety. Address potholes and other hazards faster.

Long Term Goals

- Consider a form-based code to allow for flexible land uses and to provide a comfortable and convenient built environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Develop solutions to physical barriers in order to provide convenient bicycle access to all parts of the community.
- Ensure that all bicycle facilities conform to current best practices and guidelines – such as the [NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide](#), 2012 [AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities](#) and your DOT's own guidelines.

- Develop a system of bicycle boulevards, utilizing quiet neighborhood streets, that creates an attractive, convenient, and comfortable cycling environment welcoming to cyclists of all ages and skill levels. Learn how to do it at <http://www.ibpi.usp.pdx.edu/guidebook.php>. Use the [Bicycle Boulevards section](#) of the NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide for design guidelines.
- Since arterial and collector roads are the backbone of every transportation network, it is essential to provide designated bicycle facilities along these roads and calm traffic speeds to allow bicyclists of all skill levels to reach their destinations quickly and safely. On roads with posted speed limits of more than 35 mph, it is recommended to provide protected bicycle infrastructure, such as [cycle tracks](#), [buffered bike lanes](#) or parallel shared-use paths. Particularly Wanamaker from 29th to Huntoon is in need of separated bicycle infrastructure.
- Make intersections safer and more comfortable for cyclists. Include elements such as color, signage, medians, signal detection, and pavement markings. The level of treatment required for bicyclists at an intersection will depend on the bicycle facility type used, whether bicycle facilities are intersecting, the adjacent street function and land use. See the [NACTO design guidelines](#) and the 2012 [AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities](#) for recommended intersection treatments.

Education

Low hanging fruit and fast results

- Consider creating a Bicycle Ambassador program. Have Ambassadors attend community and private events year-round to talk to residents and visitors of all ages about bicycling and to give bicycle safety demonstrations. They can also offer bike commuting presentations for area businesses.
- Team with a local bicycle group or shop to offer regular bike maintenance workshops at parks, libraries, community centers or at events. A short tutorial on how to change a flat tire can empower a person to ride their bike more often.
- Regularly host Traffic Skills 101 or bike commuter courses for engineers and planners to better understand cyclists' needs. For more information visit: www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/
- Host a League Cycling Instructor (LCI) seminar to increase the number of certified LCIs in your community. Having local instructors will enable your community to expand cycling education, recruit knowledgeable cycling ambassadors, deliver education to motorists, provide cycling education to adults and kids, and have experts available to assist in encouragement programs. Visit

<http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/> for more information.

Long Term Goals

- Start a bicyclist ticket diversion program. Road users given a citation are offered an opportunity to waive fees for violations by attending a bicycling education course. This course should include a classroom and on-road component. See what [Pima County](#) and [San Diego County](#) have done.
- Expand your motorist education program for professional drivers. See San Francisco's [Frequent Driver Education](#).
- Increase your efforts to ensure your bicycle education programs reach traditionally underserved populations, particularly seniors, women, minorities, non-English speakers and the disabled.

Encouragement

Low hanging fruit and fast results

- Expand encouragement efforts during Bike Month in partnership with local bicycle advocacy groups. Host, sponsor and encourage bicycle-themed community events, campaigns and programs. Increase your efforts on Bike to Work Day and Bike to School Day. Ensure to widely advertise all bicycle-themed community events

and programs. For ideas and more information, visit <http://www.bikeleague.org/content/national-bike-month>.

- Consider offering a ‘Ciclovía’ or ‘Summer Streets’ type event, closing off a major corridor to auto traffic and offering the space to cyclists, pedestrians and group exercise events. Check out LA’s [CicLAvia!](#)
- Set up and promote a bicycle-themed community celebration or social ride each time a new bicycle related project is completed. This is a great way to show off the community’s good efforts and introduces new users to the improvement.
- Ask your tourism board to promote bicycling in your area to [boost your local economy](#). A [survey](#) of Portland, OR visitors found that the city’s bicycle-friendly reputation played a role for 78 percent of travelers in their decision to visit Portland.
- Ensure that visitors and residents are able to rent bicycles in your community.
- Encourage local public agencies, businesses and organizations to promote cycling to the workplace and to seek recognition through the free [Bicycle Friendly Business program](#). Businesses will profit from a [healthier, happier and more productive workforce](#) while the community would profit from less congestion, better

air quality, public bike parking in prime locations provided by businesses, new and powerful partners in advocating for bike infrastructure and programs on the local, state and federal level, and business-sponsored public bike events or classes. Your community’s government should be the model employer for the rest of the community.

- Encourage local institutions of higher education to promote cycling and to seek recognition through the [Bicycle Friendly University program](#). Many colleges and universities have embraced the growing enthusiasm for more bicycle-friendly campuses by incorporating bike share programs, bike co-ops, bicycling education classes and policies to promote bicycling as a preferred means of transportation. The community could potentially profit as well: Communities near a BFU such as Stanford or University of California at Davis have a very high number of regular bicyclists (as many students bike to campus, shops and restaurants), less congestion around campus, safer streets and university-hosted public bicycle events, programs and classes.
- Design and publish a local bike map in paper and online, addressing diverse needs and skill levels (commuter, recreational cyclist, sport cyclist, mountain biker etc). The map should outline the existing on and off-road bicycle network by infrastructure type and skill level (if applicable). In addition, the map could identify the locations of landmarks, greenways, low-traffic streets, public restrooms, water fountains, bike routes,

designated scenic routes, bike stations, bike repair stations, bike parking and transit stations. Take a look at Pittsburgh's award-winning [bike map](#).

Long Term Goals

- Recreational bicycling can be promoted through bicycle amenities such as a mountain bike park, a cyclocross course or a pump track. Ensure that the facilities are accessible by bicycle, so that there is no need to drive to ride.
- Develop a series of short (2-5 mi.) (themed) loop rides around the community and provide appropriate way-finding signage. Integrate these rides into local bike maps.
- Consider launching a bike share system that is open to the public. Bike sharing is a convenient, cost effective, and healthy way of encouraging locals and visitors to make short trips by bike and to bridge the “last mile” between public transit and destinations. See what is being done across the country at <http://nacto.org/bikeshare/>

Enforcement

Low hanging fruit and fast results

- Have police officers distribute helmets, bike lights and bike locks (or coupons to the local bike shop for each

item) to encourage all types of cyclists to ride more safely, discourage bike theft and remove the barriers to attaining these essential bike accessories.

- Ask police officers to use targeted information and enforcement to encourage motorists and cyclists to share the road safely. This could be in the form of a brochure or tip card explaining each user's rights and responsibilities. Have information material available in Spanish, if applicable.
- Enforcement practices could also include positive enforcement ticketing. Police officers could team up with local stores to reward safe cycling practices by handing out gift certificates to cyclists who are “caught” following the law.
- Increase the number of officers that patrol streets on bikes, as it gives officers a better understanding of the conditions for cyclists. Also ensure that secluded off road paths are regularly patrolled to improve personal safety and encourage more people to take advantage of this amenity.
- Pass more laws that protect cyclists, e.g. implement specific penalties for motorists for failing to yield to a cyclist when turning, make it illegal to park or drive in a bike lane (intersections excepted), implement penalties for motor vehicle users that ‘door’ cyclists, ban cell phone use while driving, specifically protect all

vulnerable road users, and make it illegal to harass a cyclist.

Evaluation/Planning

Low hanging fruit and fast results

- Continue to actively involve the local bicycle community in community planning efforts, policy development and public outreach. Work more closely with the Topeka Community Cycle Project to take better advantage of their services and programs.
- Regularly conduct research on bicycle usage beyond the U.S. Census' Journey to Work report to more efficiently distribute resources according to demand. Conduct yearly counts using automated and manual counters in partnership with advocacy organizations. Consider participating in the [National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project](#).
- Routinely conduct pre/post evaluations of bicycle-related projects in order to study the change in use, car speed and crash numbers. This data will be valuable to build public and political support for future bicycle-related projects.
- Adopt a target level of bicycle use (e.g. percent of trips) to be achieved within a specific timeframe, and ensure data collection necessary to monitor progress.
- Expand efforts to evaluate bicycle crash statistics and produce a specific plan to reduce the number of crashes in the community. Available tools include [Intersection Magic](#) and the [Pedestrian and Bicyclist Crash Analysis Tool](#). See the report [Bicyclist Fatalities and Serious Injuries in New York City 1996-2005](#)
- Consider measuring the Bicycle Level of Service (BLOS) on community roads and at intersections, to be able to identify the most appropriate routes for inclusion in the community bicycle network, determine weak links and hazards, prioritize sites needing improvement, and evaluate alternate treatments for improving bike-friendliness of a roadway or intersection:
<http://www.bikelib.org/bike-planning/bicycle-level-of-service/> (roads) and
<http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/library/details.cfm?id=4425> (intersections).
- Implement a community-wide trip reduction program or ordinance. See good examples [here](#).
- Consider individualized marketing to identify and support current and potential bike commuters in your community. See what Bellingham, WA is doing: www.whatcomsmartrips.org
- Consider conducting an economic impact study on bicycling in your community. [Read about](#) what Portland, OR has done.

- Establish a mechanism that ensures that bicycle facilities and programs are implemented in traditionally underserved neighborhoods.
- Work with your mountain bike community to develop a plan for off-road access to increase opportunities for [singletrack](#) riding within the community.

For more ideas and best practices please visit the [Bicycle Friendly Community Resource Page](#).