



**BICYCLE FRIENDLY
COMMUNITY**

BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY FEEDBACK REPORT

Spring 2013



Photo: Trek

Iowa City, IA

The League of American Bicyclists has designated **Iowa City** as a Bicycle Friendly Community at the **Silver** level, because Iowa City exhibits a strong commitment to cycling. The reviewers felt that notable steps are being taken to address the needs of current bicyclists and to encourage other residents to become regular cyclists as well.

Particular **highlights** were the Think Bicycles Coalition, the large shared-use path network, the Light the Night Program, the thriving local bicycle culture, and Bike to Work Week.

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

Below, reviewers provided key recommendations to further promote bicycling in Iowa City 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 Iowa City should take to improve cycling:

- Have your Bicycle Advisory Committee meet monthly to build public support for bicycle improvements and to support the implementation of the recommendations below.
- 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. Particularly Gilbert Street and Burlington Street are in need of safe and comfortable bicycle facilities, especially the Burlington Street bridge. On roads with posted speed limits of more than 35 mph, it is recommended to provide protected bicycle infrastructure, such as [cycle tracks](#) or [buffered bike lanes](#).
- 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.
- 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.

- Continue to encourage the University of Iowa to promote cycling and to educate students on safe cycling practices. 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 Bicycle Friendly University 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.
- Invite a police officer to become an active member of the Bicycle Advisory Committee and appoint a law-enforcement point person to interact with the cyclists. This will actively facilitate stronger connections between bicycle advocates, the wider bicycling community and law enforcement, which will improve road safety for all users, and improve fair enforcement of motorist and cyclist infractions.

Benefits of Further Improving Iowa City for Cycling

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.

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.
- Increase the amount of [high quality bicycle parking](#) at popular destinations such as major transit stops. Also consider adding some [artistic bike racks](#) to enhance the sense of place of your community.
- Paint a center stripe on popular shared-use paths to mitigate conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists.

- Join NACTO and participate in the Cities for Cycling project. Cities for Cycling aims to catalog, promote and implement the world's best bicycle transportation practices in American municipalities.

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- Offer Cycling Skills classes, Traffic Skills 101 classes and bike commuter classes frequently or encourage a local bicycle advocacy group or shop to do so. Ideally, the instruction should incorporate a classroom portion as well as on-road training. The classroom portion of Traffic Skills 101 is now available [online](#) as well. For more information visit: www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/
- Host a Traffic Skills 101 or bike commuter course for engineers and planners to better understand cyclists' needs. For more information visit: www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/

Long Term Goals

- Bicycle-safety education should be a routine part of public education, and schools and the surrounding 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 middle schools, and expand the existing programs to all elementary 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.

- 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 the education program for professional drivers to include City staff, taxi cab drivers and school bus operators. See San Francisco's [Frequent Driver Education](#).
- Increase your efforts to ensure your bicycle education programs reach traditionally underserved populations, particularly seniors, women, minorities, adult non-English speakers and the disabled.
- Consider offering a 'Summer Streets' type event, closing off a major corridor to auto traffic and offering the space to cyclists, pedestrians and group exercise events.
- Encourage more 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.

Encouragement

Low hanging fruit and fast results

- Host, sponsor and/or encourage a greater variety of social and family-friendly bicycle-themed community events year-round, such as a bike movie festival, a 4th of July bike parade, an "increase-your-appetite" Thanksgiving community ride, a dress-like-Santa community ride before Christmas, a Halloween bike decoration competition, a bike to the arts event, etc. Work closely with local bicycle groups, bike shops and schools. Provide appropriate safety measures such as road closures or police escorts.

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 and bike locks (or coupons to the local bike shop for each item) in addition to lights 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 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.
- 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 penalties for motor vehicle users that ‘door’ cyclists, ban cell phone use while driving, specifically protect all vulnerable road users, and formalize a legal passing distance of 3 feet.

Evaluation/Planning

Low hanging fruit and fast results

- Ensure that there is dedicated funding for the implementation of the bicycle master plan.
- Routinely conduct pre/post evaluations of bicycle-related projects that 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).
- 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.

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