

1. Introduction

In 2012 the City of Columbus will celebrate its bicentennial. The Bicentennial Bikeways Plan will provide a new legacy as the city moves forward towards a sustainable future: a future in which Columbus is a world-class bicycling city, where people of all ages and skill levels can easily bicycle to work, to shop, for fun, for exercise, and where people will choose to bicycle rather than drive. This plan recommends strategies and actions for the four “E’s” of bicycle planning: *engineering* to provide essential facilities such as bike lanes, shared use paths, bike parking, and wayfinding, *education* to teach bicyclists safety, riding, and how-to skills, *encouragement* to provide a helping hand and information for people who want to try bicycling, and *enforcement* to remind bicyclists and motorists of their rights and responsibilities.

Implementing this plan will require the continued and collective efforts of City staff, concerned bicyclists, advocacy groups, and non-profits, as well as the continued support of Columbus’ political leaders and voters. The plan recommends a phased implementation plan, to take place over the next twenty years.

The Bicentennial Bikeways Plan was developed using many resources, including input from residents of Columbus and members of the Technical Advisory Group, the citizen Stakeholder Group, City staff, field research, and information outlined in city plans and documents.

1.1. The History of Bicycle Planning in Columbus

The City of Columbus has a history of providing for the needs of cyclists that dates back to the 1960’s, and several projects serve to make many parts of the City a pleasant place to bicycle:

- Trail system that includes the Olentangy Trail, the Alum Creek Trail, the Scioto Trail and the Walnut Creek trail
- The I-670 Bikeway
- The Ohio State University Bikeways Plan
- Incorporating bicycle lanes into redesign of Morse Road
- Bicycle facilities on Hard Road
- Installing bicycle racks on COTA buses
- Political support for encouraging more active and healthy lifestyles, as evidenced by the Mayor’s Green Team initiatives
- Enthusiastic grassroots support for improving bicycling in Columbus, as evidenced by local organizations supporting bicycling and the number of community members who provided input into this plan.

In the late 1960’s Columbus constructed its first shared-use paths along the Olentangy and Scioto Rivers to meet the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department’s goal to connect its parks with

shared-use paths. In the late nineties, funding for paths significantly increased, accelerating the progress. Columbus now has 46 miles of shared-use paths along the Olentangy and Scioto Rivers, Alum Creek, and I-670.

On-street bicycle facilities have been overseen by Columbus' Public Service Department. In the 1970's, an on-street, shared-use path was installed on High Street (across from The Ohio State University), by the Traffic Engineering and Parking Division. Unfortunately, because of crossing conflicts and maintenance difficulties, the path was later removed. In the late 1980's, when Schrock Road was widened, bike lanes were included. In recent years, bicycle lanes have been installed on Hard Road and Morse Road and bicycle route signs have been posted for several identified bicycle routes.

The program expanded in 1992 when the Bikeways Advisory Committee was created. In 1993 the Public Service Department hired a Bikeway Coordinator, primarily to develop on-street bikeways.¹ In 1998 the Recreation and Parks Department hired a full-time Greenways Coordinator to plan and develop an integrated system of linear parks, incorporating shared use paths along the City's stream corridors.

The Columbus Health Department also became involved around this time. It was after the Surgeon General of the United States published Physical Activity and Health. Since then, the Health Department has promoted more active lifestyles and has supported a long-standing injury prevention program.

Now, with the popularity of the shared use paths, an increased interest in leading healthy lifestyles, high gas prices, concerns for the environment, and tremendous support from Columbus community members, the City of Columbus has developed this updated bicycle master plan.

1.2. Purpose of the Bicentennial Bikeways Plan

The Columbus Bicentennial Bikeways Plan was developed to:

Present a vision of Columbus' bicycle transportation system. The Bicentennial Bikeways Plan provides the long-term vision for the development of a citywide bicycle network consisting of off-street trails, on-street bike lanes, signed shared roadways, and bicycle parking. The network will be complemented by educational, encouragement, and enforcement programs that serve to develop a cultural awareness of the importance of bicycling in everyday life in Columbus. The network has been developed to serve all types of bicyclists for all types of trips.

¹ In late 2005, the City's Bikeway Advisory Committee stopped meeting regularly, and as of 2007, the Bikeway Coordinator Position was unfilled. This plan recommends re-forming a citizen advisory committee, and filling the Bikeway Coordinator Position.

Address the following nine bicycle elements identified in the Columbus Comprehensive Plan:

1) Pay special attention to establishing east-west bikeway connections

This Plan has developed plans for several east-west connections, including proposed facilities along the corridors of Sullivant Avenue, State Route 161, Williams Road, Trabue Road, and a neighborhood connector north of Morse Road. Additional facilities are recommended along Refugee Road, Tussing Road, 3rd, 5th, King and Greenlawn Roads.



Broad Meadows Bridge will provide a key east-west connection

2) Take full advantage of opportunities to provide bicycle facilities within greenways

This Plan includes proposals to extend trails along the Scioto River, Alum Creek, Blacklick Creek and Big Walnut Creek, as well as a proposal to create a bicycle boulevard along Milton Avenue, improving a key connection along the Olentangy Trail.



Olentangy Trail runs along the Olentangy River

3) Connect major activity centers by bikeways

The proposed bicycle network has been developed with activity centers in mind. Whenever possible, bicycle facilities were selected to connect destinations and to serve activity centers. The implementation plan prioritizes bicycle facilities along corridors that serve important destinations, such as downtown, The Ohio State University, existing trails, commercial districts, schools, shopping centers, and houses of worship.



Bicyclists traveling through the Short North

4) Address use by bicyclists when improvements are made to arterial roadways

This Plan proposes that Columbus adopt a “Complete Streets” policy to ensure that bicycle and pedestrian facilities are provided during construction of new roadways and during major improvements to existing roadways.



Bond money at work

5) Develop signage which helps the bicyclist know the destination points of each particular route

This Plan proposes a wayfinding system that clearly guides bicyclists using distinctive signs that provide information about destinations and distance.



Berkeley, California's Bike Boulevards provide destination signage

6) Promote bicycle safety issues

This Plan recommends several education and enforcement programs, including incorporating bicycle safety education into public schools' curriculum, and driver point reduction classes, a campaign to increase the use of bicycle helmets and bike lights, and targeted enforcement to encourage bicyclists and motorists to follow traffic laws.



Bike education should start early

7) *Address bicycle parking standards and incentives while encouraging provision of bike parking*

This Plan recommends that Columbus adopt a bicycle parking ordinance and provides guidelines for the design and placement of bicycle parking. The Plan also recommends that Columbus pursue innovative bicycle parking solutions, including continuing Pedal Instead—the bicycle valet service—and considering electronic bicycle lockers and a bike station.



Bike Parking at OSU

8) *Address bikeway maintenance issues*

This plan outlines suggested maintenance procedures for on-street and off-street bicycle facilities and provides cost opinions for maintaining Columbus' existing and proposed bikeway facilities.



Street sweeping is an important part of bikeway maintenance

9) *Champion the education of motorists and bicyclists concerning the shared use of roadways.*

This Plan recommends a citywide Share the Road education and enforcement campaign, with the High Street corridor as a demonstration area.



Share the Road signs are one element of a comprehensive share the road campaign

Provide needed facilities and services. Through the use of surveys, public workshops, field work, local data on biking and walking, and best engineering practices, this plan identifies and evaluates existing bicycle facilities in the City, and recommends facilities and services that are needed to improve bicycle travel in Columbus.

Enhance and preserve the quality of life in Columbus. The development and maintenance of bicycle facilities provides for people-friendly streets, paths, trails, and activity centers available to

everyone, and supports sustainable community development. Through its recommended Complete Streets Policy, this plan supports bicycle and pedestrian travel on all city streets.

Enhance the health of the community. By promoting biking for recreation and transportation, this plan aims to improve the health of Columbus. This goal supports the vision of the Ohio Department of Public Health's Ohio State Physical Activity Plan.

Improve safety. This Plan seeks to increase safety for bicyclists in Columbus through recommended design practices, policies, proposed projects, and public education and enforcement programs.

Prioritize capital improvements. This Plan provides the City of Columbus with a prioritized list of bicycle-related capital improvements. This list reflects the input of Columbus residents over the course of the Plan's development, gathered at public meetings, through online public outreach efforts, and during the public comment period. Improvements also reflect discussions with City Staff and empirical data such as reported bicycle and pedestrian collisions and bicycle and pedestrian counts.

Maximize funding sources for implementation. The Bicentennial Bikeways Plan summarizes potential funding sources for bicycle facilities and programs, and recommends a phased implementation plan.

1.3. Contents of the Bicentennial Bikeways Plan

This document can be divided into three parts: Chapters 1-4, Chapters 5-8 and the Appendices. The first four chapters outline the existing bicycling conditions in Columbus. The last four chapters present recommendations to guide the future development of bicycling in the City and contain the implementation plan and design guidelines. The Appendices provide supporting information such as bicycle parking ordinance language, bicycle counts, survey responses, and state laws related to bicyclists.

The Columbus Bicentennial Bikeways Plan contains the following chapters:

Chapter 1, Introduction, provides an overview of the plan, its purpose, and implementation strategies.

Chapter 2, Policies, Goals and Objectives reviews relevant city, state and federal planning documents and establishes new Policies, Goals and Objectives to guide bicycle planning in Columbus.

Chapter 3, Existing Conditions, provides a description of the existing bicycle conditions. The chapter includes a map of existing bikeways, descriptions of existing bicycle programs, and a map and description of opportunities and constraints to bicycling.

Chapter 4, Needs Analysis, documents the need for bicycle transportation in Columbus, including an overview of existing user groups, demand analysis, collision analysis, benefits analysis, and a summary of public input from the online survey, public meetings, and technical advisory group.

Chapter 5, Recommended Bicycle Network and Infrastructure Programs, outlines the recommended bikeway network, recommended citywide programs to improve bicycle facilities, and details ten high-priority bicycle facility projects. The chapter includes a map of the recommended bikeway network, and descriptions of infrastructure improvement programs. Descriptions and maps of twelve high-priority demonstration projects are included in this chapter.

Chapter 6, Recommended Education, Encouragement, and Enforcement Programs, recommends programs the City should implement to promote bicycling, to increase bicyclist safety, and to increase the awareness of bicycling as a viable means of transportation.

Chapter 7, Funding and Implementation, provides a prioritized list of recommended bikeways with basic Cost Opinions, a list of potential funding sources, and recommended measures of effectiveness. This chapter provides an implementation plan for the bikeway network over the next 20 years.

Chapter 8, Design Guidelines, provides design guidelines to be referenced when implementing bikeway projects in Columbus.

The Bicentennial Bikeways Plan is supplemented by several appendices:

- Appendix A: Model Policy Goals
- Appendix B: MORPC Collision Analysis Maps
- Appendix C: Bicycle Crash Breakdown 2000 - 2004
- Appendix D: Response to Public Comments, Bicycle Counts and Survey Summary
- Appendix E: Draft Bicycle Parking Policy
- Appendix F: Programmatic Cost Estimates
- Appendix G: Bikeway Funding Sources
- Appendix H: Recommended Bikeway Projects
- Appendix I: Testing Innovative Signage

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