

CINCINNATI BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN



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CHAPTER I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the country, forward-thinking cities are turning to the bicycle as a key feature in their multi-modal transportation plans. Bicycle commuting rates are on the rise and interest in on-street bike safety and accommodations has never been greater. In Cincinnati, the existing Bikeway Plan was produced in 1976 but has never been updated. While over time this plan was partially fulfilled, it has now become outdated.

The citizens of Cincinnati are keenly interested in “green” and healthy lifestyles, economical transportation options, and creating a sustainable and vibrant urban community. To help reach these goals, the city is committed to facilitating and promoting bicycle use as a safe, convenient and comfortable form of transportation and recreation. This new plan will chart a course for integrating bicycle facilities into our existing street system, and will identify key policies and programs that will support more and safer cycling.

INTRODUCTION

Cincinnati has the potential to be a city where thousands of people ride bicycles every day. It has many bicycle-friendly features upon which to build. These include an emerging waterfront park; Ohio River Trail and Mill Creek Greenway Trail; redevelopment and repopulation of the residential communities in and near Downtown; dense employment in Uptown university and hospital districts; and many mixed use neighborhoods where bicycling can connect residents to shopping and restaurants in neighborhood business districts, schools, parks, recreation centers and other local destinations. Moreover, a significant portion of Cincinnati residents do not own cars and are dependent on transit, walking and/or bicycling for daily transportation.



The objectives and outcomes of this plan support broad citywide goals including enhanced public safety for city residents and visitors, opportunities for youth, healthy neighborhoods, and strengthening neighborhood economies. Having greater numbers of bicyclists using city streets contributes to public safety by providing more eyes on the public realm. Bicycling is also a great way for urban residents with busy lives to combine healthy exercise with daily travel. Achieving population growth in revitalized neighborhoods can mean more automobiles, congestion and increased pollution; however, by providing safe and convenient bicycle travel, motor vehicle use and the need for additional parking can be kept at manageable levels.

The timing of this plan’s development is fortuitous, as it can inform the transportation element of the city’s new Comprehensive Plan, which is being developed in 2010. In a

survey undertaken at the 2010 Neighborhood Summit, 93 percent of respondents said that creating a walkable and bikeable city is “important” to the future of Cincinnati.¹

The Cincinnati Bicycle Transportation Plan (CBTP) is a first step toward making Cincinnati a bicycle-friendly city. It assumes that current low bicycling rates are in part due to inadequate bicycle infrastructure, and a perception that the streets in the city are not comfortable for cyclists, especially for those who are novices or less-skilled. The CBTP not only identifies a network of recommended bicycle facilities and accommodations that will build on the facilities already in place, but addresses street management and maintenance issues. It also identifies needed programs in the areas of bicycle safety education, encouragement and enforcement of traffic laws.

This plan will guide Cincinnati in creating an ongoing bicycle transportation program, by:

- mapping out an integrated on-street and off-street bikeway network,
- describing the bicycle facilities that will make up the network,
- addressing bicycle parking needs,
- stressing safety education for motorists, bicyclists and youth,
- providing an action plan for encouragement and enforcement,
- recommending transportation and development policy changes,
- identifying how bicycle use should be integrated into new rail transit systems that are being planned,
- providing guidance regarding street maintenance and management practices.

Over the next five years, an aggressive program of on-street bicycle transportation improvements (~90 miles) will create Phase I of a city-wide network of bicycle facilities (see page 3, Map A). In the first 18 months, this will include 14 miles of high priority facilities on Spring Grove Avenue, Madison Road and Riverside Drive. The full scope of the plan calls for 343 miles of on-street bicycle facilities to be implemented in three phases, over a fifteen year period, including: 116 miles in Phase II (2016-2020) and 122 miles in Phase III.²

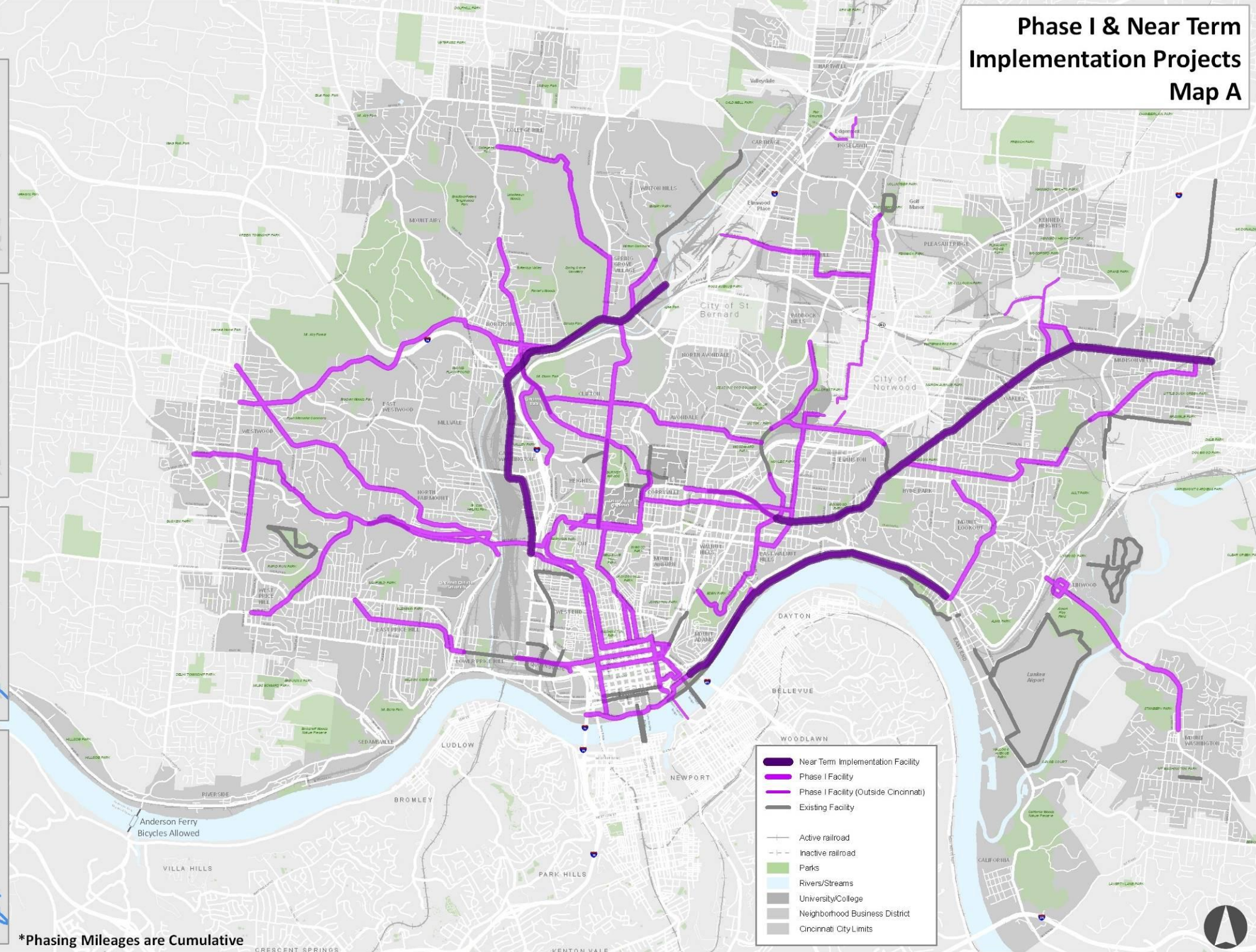
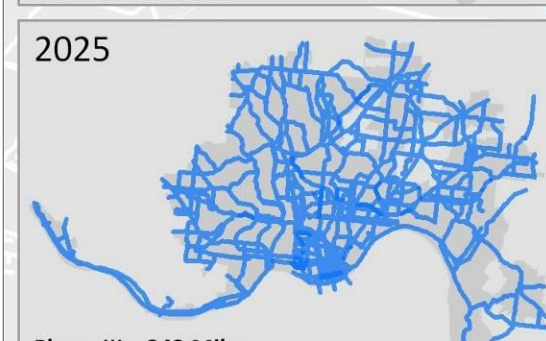
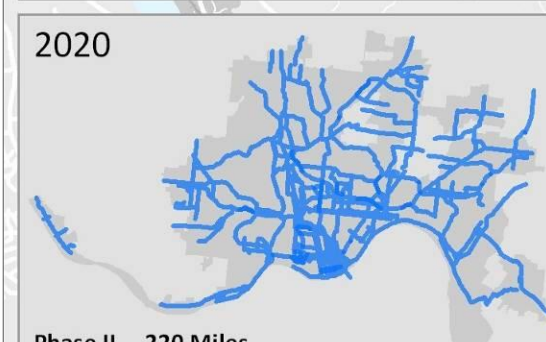
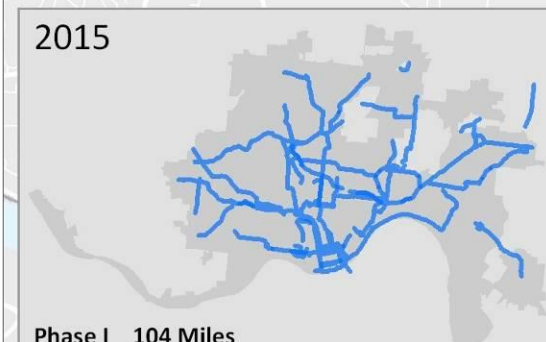
Phase I of the network will stress continuity of facilities and service to key destinations. It will enable more Cincinnatians to feel comfortable and safe bicycling to the local market or all the way to work. It will set Cincinnati on the right course for the 21st Century.



¹ Compiled results from the 2010 Neighborhood Summit, Transportation and Transit Element, page 3; <http://www.plancincinnati.org/pages/library.htm>

² The total on-street Bicycle Network will include the following: ~13 miles of existing facilities, ~284 miles of new facilities, and ~46 miles of connecting streets that do not require bicycle facilities.

Phased On-Street Network Implementation



BENEFITS OF BICYCLING

Encouraging greater bicycle use in Cincinnati will bring benefits to residents and visitors alike. These benefits are summarized below.



Traffic Relief

Increased bicycle travel will slow the growth of motor vehicle use on Cincinnati roadways, easing congestion and on-street parking demand.

Environmental Benefits

In 2004, vehicle emissions were responsible for 44 percent of the smog produced in the Cincinnati region.³ The region does not comply with proposed new air quality standards for which U.S. E.P.A. will be designating attainment areas in 2011. Motor vehicles are also a

source of water pollution in the Ohio River and its tributaries. Even for short- and medium-distance trips, substituting the bicycle for the automobile will reduce the amount of air pollutants emitted into the air we breathe and washed into our waterways.

Health Benefits

In recent years the National Center for Disease Control (CDC) has been making Americans aware of an alarming and dangerous trend in the health of our national population: obesity rates are climbing at record pace and contributing to heart disease, diabetes and a host of other health problems.

According to the CDC, 27.5 percent of Cincinnatians are obese and an additional 33.5 percent are considered overweight, making 61% of Cincinnatians at increased risk to suffer from debilitating and deadly diseases.⁴

Hospitals, public health departments and others in the health community are rallying to address this problem and they are looking to partner with transportation agencies to help bring back bicycling and walking as safe and significant modes of travel in our cities. Increased levels of bicycling can and will improve the health of Cincinnati residents. Biking to the store, school or work provides a time-efficient, low-cost way of attaining the U.S. Surgeon General's recommended daily allowance of physical activity. Bicycle exercise can help reduce heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses, which are not uncommon in Cincinnati.

Economic Benefits

On average, U.S. households spend about thirty-five percent of household income on housing. After housing, motor vehicles are the second-highest household expense for most families. Reliance on bicycling can reduce household transportation expenses, freeing up money for other things. For example, in Cincinnati's closest-in neighborhoods,

³ OKI clean air website: <http://www.oki.org/cleanair/index.asp> In April 2004, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated the Greater Cincinnati area as basic nonattainment under the 0.084 ozone standard. In December 2004, the U.S. EPA designated the Greater Cincinnati area as nonattainment under the annual fine particulate matter (PM2.5) standard. <http://www.oki.org/cleanair/airquality/airquality.html>

⁴ 2008 Data from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

bicycle reliance by choice (complemented by use of Metro and walking) can allow a single person to live without a car, or a two-car family to give up a second car (typically an \$8,000 to \$9,000 annual expense).⁵

For the approximately 28,000 households who do not have access to a car, not by choice but by economic necessity, adding bicycling to the mix can reduce dependence on transit and often broadens one's mobility.

On a different economic front, bicycling can help bring tourist dollars into the city. Active vacations are one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourist industry. Bicycling also allows tourists to travel more quickly between local sites and enables neighborhoods outside of Downtown to attract visitors and tap into the spending power of the 6.7 million visitors who come to Cincinnati annually.⁶



CURRENT TRENDS IN U.S. CITIES

Planning for urban bicycle transportation has become the norm in U.S. cities--thirty-nine of the 50 largest cities report having a bicycle plan in place.⁷ Cities similar to Cincinnati that are currently implementing their bike plans include Indianapolis, Kansas City, Nashville, Baltimore, Columbus and Chicago.



Chicago completed the *2015 Plan*, its first comprehensive bicycle master plan, in 2003. Prior to this, in the 1990's Chicago completed a bike transportation policy plan, built 25 miles of bicycle lanes and hired a full-time bicycle coordinator.

Today, Chicago has 113 miles of bike lanes, 50 miles of shared use paths and 241 miles of signed bike routes. Its bike commuting rate more than doubled between 2000 and 2008, as measured by the American Community Survey, and is currently at 1.1 percent of commute trips, eleventh in the nation. Chicago has 15 staff (FTE) working on bicycle transportation programs.⁸

Baltimore completed its first bicycle master plan in 2006. This plan called for 38 miles each of bike lanes and shared lane markings in its "Introductory Network," which was slated to be implemented by 2010. By 2009, the City reported completion of 15 miles of new bike lanes, 14 miles of sharrows, and 8 miles of new signed bike routes. Completed trail mileage has almost

doubled from 13 to 25 miles. By the end of 2010 another 25 miles of facilities which are

⁵ Based on calculations from *Making Housing Affordable by Reducing Second-Car Ownership*, Patrick H. Hare, 1995. Adjusted for inflation and today's gas prices.

⁶ Cincinnati 2010 Destinations Planning Guide published by Cincinnati USA: Convention and Visitor's Bureau. Accessed Online at [<http://www.virtualonlineeditions.com/publication/?i=30727>] on April 15, 2010.

⁷ Bicycling and Walking in the United States: 2010 Benchmarking Report, Alliance for Biking and Walking, 2010, p. 61

⁸ Ibid.

in the pipeline, are expected to be complete. Based on the observations of city staff, Baltimore expects that the 2010 census will show a doubling of its bike commuting rate over the past decade.

PLANNING APPROACH

The CBTP was completed in a ten-month planning process, from September 2009 through June 2010. A Project Advisory Team, made up of two representatives from local bicycle advocacy organizations and four city DOTE staff, guided the planning process. A consultant team was hired to provide technical expertise, in depth experience with bicycle transportation planning, local knowledge of traffic patterns and engineering practices, and leadership through each stage of the planning process.

Scope

Previous city and regional planning activities have only minimally addressed bicycling on Cincinnati's street system, yet the street network carries the greatest potential to facilitate bicycling for transportation. For this reason, the scope of this planning effort looks primarily at the city's roadways. While not ignoring the need for off-road bicycle accommodations, the goal of this plan is to determine how to make the City's streets safer and more attractive to cyclists.

Public Involvement

Intensive public involvement was the keystone to this planning approach. A list of activities conducted in the autumn of 2009 and spring of 2010 follows:

- Forty stakeholders representing bicycle advocacy groups, community organizations, local businesses, and city agencies attended a kick-off meeting in September 2009.
- Two "rolling focus groups" (September & October 2009) were conducted involving more than 25 local cyclists. These rides served to a) familiarize the consultant team with both the premier and challenging bicycling conditions in the city and b) familiarize local cyclists with the consultant team and bicycle planning process.
- More than 85 people attended a public open house in October. At this meeting a wide range of information was gathered from citizens, community activists and cyclists about how and where to make the city more bicycle-friendly.
- During the month of October, more than 600 people completed an online survey about their cycling habits and viewpoints on cycling in the city.
- An interactive online map was used to gather information about a wide range of specific bicycle safety issues, preferential routes, avoided routes, and places where maintenance or infrastructure improvements are needed. More than 655 comments were collected.
- In May 2010, a second public open house was conducted to present a draft plan and solicit feedback from the public.



Technical Analysis

The technical analysis involved a variety of engineering-oriented activities beginning with an assessment of existing conditions. Existing on-street bicycle facilities, signed bike routes, bike parking locations, shared use paths (trails) and proposed facilities were mapped. Physical deterrents and barriers to bicycling were then identified and mapped as well, including major highways, railroad yards and lines, difficult intersections, steep slopes, and the arterial roadways found to be most challenging to bicyclists.

The central technical task included an assessment of approximately 350 miles of arterial and collector streets. These streets were analyzed in a “windshield” survey that included frequent stops to measure streets and verify street characteristics and parking regulations. Existing data provided by the city was utilized including posted speed limits and street widths. The data gathered was augmented by a wide variety of pre-existing information such as mapped bicycle crash locations, mapped bus routes and stops, the OKI Bicycle Route Map and city demographic data. This analysis was further informed by city staff’s knowledge of traffic patterns, the recent history of planning activities in particular corridors and the status of a variety of street improvement projects developing concurrent to the bicycle plan.



A third analysis task was undertaken by volunteer cyclists who investigated potential routes that might serve as low-traffic alternate routes to arterial roadways. These routes largely include neighborhood streets and park/school-ground paths or sidewalks that might prove useful to novice/lesser-skilled cyclists and teenage youth.

The goal of the technical analysis was to identify a network of preliminary recommended bicycle facilities and routes and the implementation actions necessary to achieve them.

Program and Policy Inventory/Analysis

This analysis focused on developing programmatic and policy recommendations in the areas of safety education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation.⁹ A special workshop was conducted in February 2010 with 35 stakeholders representing various city departments active in one or more of these areas, as well as community groups such as MoBo Bicycle Cooperative, Queen City Bike, Cincinnati Cycling Club and Bike/PAC. Existing programs and policies were inventoried, reviewed and recommendations for new initiatives were discussed and documented.

The consultant team and DOTE staff reviewed city ordinances, state laws and street engineering policies and practices to identify areas where changes in approach would improve bicycle safety and facilitate greater accommodations in the future.

Review and Plan Adoption

To achieve widespread support and the highest quality product, the consultant’s findings were reviewed by citizens and city staff throughout the process. For example:

⁹ Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, and Evaluation make up the traditional *Five E's* of bicycle planning; a conceptual framework that remains as relevant today as when it was first developed ~ forty years ago.

- Initial public input was used extensively to identify and prioritize the 350-mile network of streets to be studied.
- After initial work by the consultant team, a draft Bicycle Network was reviewed by the Project Advisory Team and other staff within DOTE. To kick off their review period, the consultant team provided staff with a technical presentation describing how the preliminary facility recommendations and implementation actions were developed by the consulting team (this presentation also discussed existing and emerging bicycle facility design in the U.S.). Feedback was gathered from staff and further revisions were undertaken.
- The draft Bicycle Network map was posted online for public review and comment. Public awareness about the draft map was facilitated via community e-mail lists, TV and radio interviews, and articles in local magazines and newspapers.
- Finally, prior to formal review by the City Council, the draft plan was presented at an open house during Bicycle Month (May), to solicit further public comment.

BICYCLING IN CINCINNATI TODAY

Who Bicycles in Cincinnati?

As part of this plan, a survey of cyclists was conducted.¹⁰ Based on the results of the survey, information gathered at a public open house, and observations made by the Project Advisory Team and consultants, it appears that residents who regularly cycle in the city can be grouped in the following categories:

- Hearty and committed bicycle commuters.
- Regular fitness and recreational riders.
- A demographically diverse set of “urban-core” residents who, for social, environmental or economic reasons, live without a car and use a bicycle as one among multiple transportation alternatives.
- Occasional recreational riders who typically ride the Ohio River, Little Miami or Lunken Airport trails as a weekend outing.
- Children who ride for fun and typically stick to sidewalks or riding in city parks.



Why Cincinnatians Bicycle

Like many Eastern and Midwestern cities, Cincinnati is experiencing resurgent interest in bicycling. In 2009, the League of American Bicyclists analyzed updated *bike commute* data from the American Community Survey (conducted by the Census bureau) and found that the city’s bike-to-work rate doubled between 2000 and 2008, despite very little new attention being given to bicycle accommodation by city agencies.

¹⁰ Twenty questions were asked including questions about trip frequency, distances and purposes, motivation for bicycling, preferences regarding facility types and grading the city’s current conditions on a number of factors important to bicycling—facilities, safety, pavement quality, bike parking, etc..



Based on what citizens and cyclists said in the planning process, this resurgence appears to stem from a growing community of young and middle-aged professionals with new attitudes about transportation and a commitment to maintaining one’s personal health. It is also supported by a core of older and committed area cyclists who have cycled all their lives for commuting, recreation or both and are invigorated by their youthful cohorts.

Additional factors feeding this resurgence include the growing need for close-to-home recreation opportunities and residents’ devotion to Cincinnati’s great parks and hilltop views, especially along the bluffs of the Ohio River.

Still further, increasing gas prices, widespread concern with global warming and America’s new interest in greener lifestyle choices create a context for this resurgence that suggests it is not likely to wane anytime soon.

Why Many Cincinnatians Don’t Bicycle

Admittedly, bicycling on many of Cincinnati’s arterial streets is largely for the brave at heart. Many cyclists, even the most skilled, report being uncomfortable in Cincinnati traffic and are discouraged by the lack of dedicated space provided in the roadways. Others find pavement conditions unsafe, and many report lack of respect or outright hostility from motorists as a major disincentive.

Conditions such as these create a significant disincentive for residents to choose the bicycle as a regular transportation option and potentially limit the overall ability of bicycling to grow.

Bicycle Commuting

Table 1 shows that Cincinnati bike commuting rates are currently very low. Out of approximately 135,000 employed people over age 16, only 675 are bicycle commuters.¹¹

Means of Transportation to Work	Total
Drive alone	69.6%
Carpooled	10.4%
Public Transportation (excluding taxicab)	10.6%
Walked	3.5%
Bicycle	0.5%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	1.1%

Table 1: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 Community Survey (135,445 total workers 16 years old and over in Cincinnati)

¹¹ While this data does not include the many non-work trips people make by bike, and is collected in such a way that usually results in an undercount of bike commuting, it still points to relatively low bike commuting rates, and probably low bike use for all transportation purposes.

POTENTIAL FOR INCREASED BICYCLING

Despite the less than ideal roadway conditions, Cincinnati has great potential for higher levels of bicycling.

A City of Neighborhoods

To begin with, most of Cincinnati's many neighborhoods were developed with pre-WWII land use patterns, meaning that residential uses are mixed with neighborhood retail, employment, and other activities. The city has retained many of the neighborhood business and commercial areas, some are thriving today as economic activity and young professionals move back into the city. This means that a significant amount of daily travel is accomplished using relatively short trips, for which the bicycle is highly effective.

A majority of Cincinnati's jobs are located either Downtown (70,000) or Uptown (60,000) in the University of Cincinnati/East Campus area.¹² Both of these locations are generally accessible by bicycle from many parts of the city.

Cincinnati has growing residential neighborhoods in and around the Downtown core. Moreover, emphasis is being placed on revitalizing the inner city neighborhoods, many of which are fairly level and close to employment centers. For many people in Cincinnati's close-in neighborhoods, trips to the Downtown area are just a bit too far for walking but are perfect for bicycling. Cycling is also a fast way to travel to and through Downtown and across the river to Covington or Newport, Kentucky.



Economic Incentives

Carless households hold great potential for increased bicycle ridership in the City. Approximately 28,000 households do not have access to an automobile. Moreover, carless households predominate in a number of neighborhoods that are within 2 miles of Downtown or the University of Cincinnati area where many jobs are located.¹³

Bicycling is an inexpensive mode of transportation that can enable low-income people to find and keep jobs, access health care services, and take advantage of shopping, education, and recreational opportunities. The economic advantages of bicycling can also be captured by car owners, who can lower their overall transportation costs, add to the life of their vehicle and improve their health at the same time.

Health and Fitness

As already noted, maintaining health and fitness is increasingly a motivation for Americans to adopt more active lifestyles. With hospitals and others starting anti-obesity, healthy living campaigns like Do Right, Go Vibrant and Cincinnati Fit Kids, the time is ripe for making it attractive to get daily exercise and get to work all in the same half hour.

A Plan of Action

With revitalization of parks, residential communities and retail areas occurring throughout the city, new motivations to change one's lifestyle, and strong neighborhoods

¹² Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2004.

¹³ 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) data on household transportation, U.S. Census Bureau

to build on, there is great potential to increase bicycle use for both commuting and other transportation needs, as well as recreation.

However, to achieve increased use, and improve safety at the same time, clear goals and objectives need to be established. The following chapter of this report articulates a vision for the city, its primary goals and a set of objectives and strategies for achieving them.

SUMMARY OF GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

VISION:

Bicycling is an integral part of daily life in Cincinnati, and persons of all ages and abilities feel comfortable using a bicycle for a wide variety of travel purposes.

PRIMARY GOALS:

By 2015, double the number of people bicycling regularly for transportation, while at the same time,

Reducing the rate of crashes and severity of injuries and maintaining the existing low rate of fatalities.

Objective 1: Provide an attractive and functional network of bicycle infrastructure.

- *Strategy 1: In phases, implement a comprehensive and continuous network of facilities and services for bicycle transportation and recreation.*
- *Strategy 2: Increase the availability of short term, long term, and high security, on-demand bicycle parking and related support facilities at key destinations across the city.*
- *Strategy 3: Continue development of off-street shared use paths to create a connected trail system and to augment and support the on-street bicycle network.*



Objective 2: Support programs and initiatives that encourage bicycling for its health, recreation, transportation, economic and environmental benefits.

- *Strategy 1: Collaborate with bicycle advocacy groups to support encouragement initiatives and events throughout the year, including National Bicycle Month activities in May.*
- *Strategy 2: Establish partnerships with community organizations to develop programs to promote bicycling as a part of green and active lifestyles, chronic disease prevention, and youth recreation.*
- *Strategy 3: Establish new partnerships with the business community to develop*

encouragement programs that target employees and customers.

Objective 3: Improve bicycle safety through enforcement, education and engineering initiatives.

- *Strategy 1: Enable the Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) to more effectively enforce traffic laws that affect the safety of bicyclists.*
- *Strategy 2: Encourage the public and private school systems to teach Cincinnati's children safe bicycling skills and practices, and reach adult parents through child involvement.*
- *Strategy 3: Build internal capacity within the DOTE to understand, design and implement high quality bicycle facilities that will increase bicyclists' safety in traffic.*
- *Strategy 4: Adopt a City ordinance (traffic law) to require motorists that are passing bicyclists to provide a minimum of 3 feet of clear space between the motor vehicle and the cyclist.*



Objective 4: Foster public attitudes toward bicycling to include mutual respect among motorists and bicyclists and a general perception of bicycling as a safe mode of transportation and recreation.

- *Strategy 1: Using a variety of low-cost communication mediums, educate the general public (motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians) about appropriate etiquette and safe bicycle and vehicle operation in urban traffic conditions.*
- *Strategy 2: Seek institutional and corporate partners and funding for a region-wide media campaign designed to address etiquette and safety issues related to potential conflicts among bicyclist, motorist and pedestrians.*
- *Strategy 3: Advocate with state government to prioritize bicycle laws and safety in a) driver's licensing study materials, b) test questions, and c) public and private driver education curriculums.*

Objective 5: Adopt city policies and create institutional structure to implement the Bike Plan goals and objectives and evaluate progress toward achieving its goals.

- *Strategy 1: As a matter of policy, integrate recommended bikeway improvements into street improvement and safety projects and include bicycle quality of service and CBTP implementation among the various criteria used to prioritize all street improvement projects.*

- *Strategy 2: Provide sufficient funding through the city Capital Improvement Program (CIP), federal and state transportation grant funding, and other sources for implementation of the CBTP (including non-infrastructure programming).*
- *Strategy 3: Ensure that the Department of Transportation and Engineering and other key departments have sufficient staff and training to lead and coordinate CBTP implementation.*
- *Strategy 4: Develop procedures for prioritizing the maintenance routines for streets in the adopted bicycle network and provide sufficient funding for network maintenance.*
- *Strategy 5: Coordinate planning, design, and implementation of bicycle facilities with other City plans and major developments and neighboring communities.*
- *Strategy 6: Adopt zoning ordinances and/or development regulations that 1) provide an option for new developments to mitigate all or part of motor vehicle traffic impacts by providing bicycle facilities in the CTBP, and 2) require new commercial and multi-family developments to provide appropriate amounts of high quality short-term and long-term (high security) bicycle parking.*
- *Strategy 7: Establish a formal citizen advisory committee to the City Manager, Mayor and Council.*
- *Strategy 8: Evaluate progress annually and publish a Report Card that will quantify the number/mileage of facilities installed, bike counts on select corridors, progress in the areas of education, encouragement, enforcement, and the results of a citizen survey to gauge public sentiment.*
- *Strategy 9: Review and update the Bicycle Master Plan every 5 years.*

