

2019 Community Revitalization Conference Session Notes

Getting Your Community in Gear – Bike-Based Economic Development Insights for Non-Cyclists

Mark Twain essay – “Taming the Bicycle” – “Get a bicycle. You will not regret it, if you live.”

Demystifying a market segment

What does this person want? [covered bridge silhouette image]

- Every market segment has particularities that are worth your while to learn about and respond to
- For most of those segments we don’t assume that we have to belong to the segment to understand it, but for some reason people seem to think that if they don’t bike, there is no way they could possibly comprehend the priorities and interests of those who do
- But, like so much else in life, it is learnable
- Admittedly, it is a broad segment, encompassing multiple sub-segments. Residents and visitors; commuters, recreational riders, carless and carfree and carlite, touring: shoestring – economy – comfort – high end; you may want to target just the high end touring people, but the thing to realize is that your community will not be enticing to them until it’s enticing to the rest, and the bonus is that those changes/improvements also make it a better place for everyone else who lives there, works there, plays there, and visits there
- The improvements you might choose to make for one end of the segment also apply for the others. The presentation will help you understand a little more about these riders. We’ll get into specifics but what they are looking for is a welcoming and safe cycling environment, local insights, and food – lots of food. These are people who have been exercising – they will eat a surprising amount of beer and ice cream. Ice cream three times a day is not out of the question.
- It’s all about consistency of economic support – not every rider is wealthy – but even the economy rider will be investing far more in the local economy than those that drive past on the highway. As Path Less Pedaled points out a driver going 250 miles, takes a part of one day to do so, and might buy gas and might purchase a drink or snack along the way. Journey over. Mostly they are on the bypass and they do indeed pass you by. The cyclists covering the same ground (250 miles) may not pay a lot for any one item, but they will have multiple overnights and meals, possibly maintenance and repair expenses, and the leisure time to shop and visit.
- Benefits for everyone – Dan Burden –
 - [Making the Case for Designing Active Cities \(activelivingresearch.org/making-case-designing-active-cities\)](http://activelivingresearch.org/making-case-designing-active-cities) and
 - [Why cities with high bicycling rates are safer for all road users \(sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140518301488?via%3Dihub#!\)](http://sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140518301488?via%3Dihub#!)

What are we talking about when we say “bikes”

- their physical and legal parameters
- hands-on display with one standard bike outfitted for commuting, a bike trailer, and one alternative frame design (depending on availability through Bike Erie)

Who are we talking about – range of cyclists

- range of ages, skills, interests
- recreation v. transportation
- touring – shoestring economy comfort high end
- many different needs
- should accommodate as wide a range as possible, not just one type

What are those cyclists looking for?

Safety – don't have seatbelts or airbags or crumple zones or crash test

You don't have to reinvent the wheel, there are many resources out there and what is sought is common sense: a welcoming driving/biking environment with space on the road, additional off-road facilities, attention paid to shoulders, etc. and a mutually respectful culture between cyclists and drivers

- PA Vehicle Code, first adopted in 1976, recent bike law changes in 2016
- Complete Streets, national organization founded in 2003
- Vision Zero
- PennDOT Connects
- LTAP
- Pedestrian and Pedalcycle Advisory Committee
- League of American Bicyclists

Security – this discussion of bike parking is going to seem obsessive, but that should only bring home the point that drivers do not have to think like this, their needs are already and comprehensively accommodated; you know there will be some kind of car parking options fairly nearby your destination; in fact if you have to go several blocks on foot, you'll be really put out; and it's even more rare to discover a place that you simply can't get to by driving (e.g. Venice or Casoli)

- storage, short term, long term
- how to lock a bike – Sheldon Brown technique
- different bike values and types, basic design criteria: location (convenience, cover), support (frame in two points, security (grouted tubes and no easy off bolts), accommodation (work for multiple bicycle configurations, trailers), intuitive function (no explanation required), not damaging to bicycle (finishes, leverage for bending wheels or breaking locks)
- point out bike petting zoo – think about whether they would work with the racks you have
- geographically dependent -- map the country/world to room – who has visited different locations, which ones are bike friendly?
- convenience

Fun –

- transportation as a positive aspect of life – retain that childlike joy
- adults who blog about the pleasures of a carfree life
- transform your place
- ask a cyclist to tell you what they would like to see/do in your community
- Ask them whether it's easy for them to figure that out

Beauty –

- unlike car infrastructure, bicycle infrastructure is actually an amenity for everyone;
- it's not just space subtracted from the public realm, but rather an augmentation of it
- bikes are in scale with human bodies and with human-scaled public spaces
- <https://www.fastcompany.com/3063344/these-animated-videos-show-just-how-much-space-cars-waste-in-our-cities>

How is this different from things a non-cyclist would think of – fine-grained focus on infrastructure, design, conditions, topo, details, and (as evidenced by the endless images of bike parking) what to do with the bike when we arrive

- more detailed response to the design, layout, and condition of the road network
- very attuned to changes in elevation and safety/pleasantness of a route
- more readily thinking of one's self as a pedestrian upon dismounting, appreciating any and all pedestrian infrastructure and functionality

How do you go about this? Do you have to become an expert? Reach out to the experts that are already there.

- partner with any local mobility-focused non-profits or community organizations
- ask for input from the public, do a bicycle demand survey
- map the place you are now and where you would like to be in future
- pursue some easy wins – if it's already accessible and present, brand biking in your place, provide bike bells or bicycle seat covers (shower caps) or flashing tail-lights or high visibility gear
- be an ally – listen to the cyclists in the community; promote safety and be a voice encouraging local officials, business owners, and institutions to recognize the benefits bikes can bring to the community
- educate yourself – keep an eye on relevant organizations, if you're on social media, here are some ideas of who to follow (hot links available on LNC website Walk the Walk page, included at end of document)
 - 8 80 Cities
 - Active Towns
 - Better Block Foundation
 - Bike Score (part of Walk Score)
 - CityLab
 - HUB Cycling
 - League of American Bicyclists
 - Main Street America
 - Momentum Mag
 - National Complete Streets Coalition (part of Smart Growth America)
 - Open Streets Project
 - PARK(ing) Day
 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center
 - People for Bikes
 - Planetizen
 - Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
 - Smart Cities Dive

- Smart Growth America
- Streetsblog
- Streetsblog USA
- Strong Towns
- Tactical Urbanism Guide
- Walk Score
- The Walkable and Livable Communities Institute (part of AARP)

Why do all this – what’s waiting at the end of the tunnel?

- personal health
- community health
- bikes are good for business,
- lots of opportunities to sell them food, snacks, drinks, lodging, gear... but especially beer and ice cream;
- Dan Burden quote, and more from AARP Liveable Communities www.aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/info-2016/why-bicycling-infrastructure-is-good-for-people-who-dont-ride-bikes.html

1. Safer Streets Are Safer For Everyone
 2. Safer Sidewalks
 3. Smoother Trips
 4. Less Congestion
 5. Increasingly Livable Communities
 6. Economic Vitality
 7. More Opportunity
 8. Saves Money For Taxpayers
 9. Health Care Savings
 10. A Greener Environment
- P.S. People of All Ages Like to Bicycle

What does your community have now?

- Assess what is out there -- amenities to highlight:
 - Bike organizations or groups
 - Bike parking
 - Bike destination stores --
 - Bike destination sites – trails, routes, skill parks – are they known/publicized like your other amenities
 - People services – food, drink, ice cream, beer, shelter
 - Bike people services – charging, water, wifi, food at all hours, showers, bike repair, shipping
 - Bike culture – drivers who understand rules of the road as they apply to bikes and are comfortable/familiar with how to drive safely and respectfully around them (not excess yielding, just the right/legally determined amount, not assuming the cyclists can see you waving inside your mirrored glass roll-over, understanding that bikes may take the travel lane when needed, appreciating hand signals but also knowing that it is not always safe to use them nor is it legally required, being

confident around cyclists wiggling their handlebars to stay in one place rather than thinking they are veering somewhere at 0mph, recognizing that sometimes cyclists make maneuvers that are a bit puzzling and they aren't always just trolling you, there may be no other option available to them to do what they need to do, e.g. turning right not into the cross street travel lane but onto the opposite sidewalk, exactly how would you signal for that?) -- big points, understanding handlebar motions, the inability to use hand signals when going very slowly, and not being able to make eye contact

- If you don't have entries in these categories yet, what could your community put in place – revisit the same categories and think about partnering to encourage and promote them

Next level improvements include physical connections between –

- sites and destinations noted above,
- your community and nearby communities

And bonus points for considering the importance of integrated transportation options –

- can range be extended with public transit access?
- under special circumstances (a daytime meeting, bad weather, a sick child), is the only option to ditch the bike for a car or can you use transit or other ride share?

Short term list of quick fixes

- Talk to the municipal administrators, elected officials, and the Department of Public Works – emphasize the economic development angle of keeping cycle routes and shoulders clear of debris and snow
- Engage the non-biking public in making our streets SAFE (Streets Are For Everyone) – again share the economic development angle (and also point out the additional co-benefits)
- Consult with local cyclists and cycling organizations
- Map existing routes and share that information
- Cultivate cycling culture – welcome events, offer vocal support of cycling, encourage area businesses to think about ways they can become more bike-friendly

Where will you start on this route?

- Path Less Pedaled Bike-Friendly Business basics, to make the place more welcoming to tourists
- Adventure Cycling – studies – to understand the market and potential even more
- League of American Bicyclists Bicycle Friendly Business certification (more for employees/internal, but a significant part of cultivating a culture of cycling)
- Find a Bike Summit or advocacy organization you can engage with – e.g. Walk Bike Places, National Coalition for Complete Streets, SAFE, National Bike Summit
- Do you have to get on a bike to do this? No, but that said, maybe you could find something that would work for you to try it – a lot cheaper than renting a convertible, and good for your physical and mental health

Many market segments are varied – the same goes for cyclists – not every cyclist is a goldmine, but they are all surprisingly hungry, and the guy that travels on a shoestring is still part of creating that cycling-friendly ambience and culture that attracts the comfort cyclists with their spendthrift ways. You can't peel off just this economic upper echelon until the basics are in place. Reminiscent of how the roads were paved for cyclists, but good for everyone (cars!)

Photo credits

Happy bike passenger – momentum mag photo courtesy of Tern

Bike lock images – thebestbikelock.com

Overloaded panniers – sheldonbrown.com

Baskets on bicycle – worldattop.blogspot.com

Ghostbike – bicycling.com

Bike crash test dummy – Ottawa Sun video screen capture

Recumbent riders – StateCollege. Com

Longtail bikes – Cargo Bike Mag

Vespa rider – The Brooklyn Paper / Jeff Bachner

Skateboarding – Jooinn.com

Drainage grate design – mybikeadvocate.com

Car/Bus/Bike Capacity images – Muenster, Germany Planning press office

Bike-Based Economic Development Links

 [Making the Case for Designing Active Cities | Active Living Research](#)

 [Why cities with high bicycling rates are safer for all road users - ScienceDirect](#)

 [How to Pass a Bicyclist](#)

 [Bicycle Parking Guidelines - Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals](#)

 [EssentialsofBikeParking_FINA.pdf](#)

 [The Path Less Pedaled](#)

 [Building Bike Tourism | Travel Initiatives | Adventure Cycling Association](#)

 [BeierleBikeTourism.pdf](#)

 [unPAved of the Susquehanna River Valley - Home](#)

 [Walk the Walk - Drive the Drive - Lewisburg Neighborhoods Corporation](#)