

Crossroads

Spring 2002



TRANSPORTATION Information Center — LTAP

University of Wisconsin—Madison

Bikeways are bustin' out all over



From Beloit to Land o' Lakes, Wisconsin communities small and large are going multi-modal. Bicycle friendly streets, bridges, and paths are sprouting everywhere. Encouraged by citizens, facilitated by route plans, and supported by matching funds from state and federal transportation budgets, local governments are building more bikeways than ever before.

"We started four or five years ago," says Chris Haese, City of Neenah principal planner. "Our comprehensive planning told us that the community wanted bicycle facilities. Also, the city ranked fairly high in bicycle accidents compared to other communities of similar size."

A Neenah Trails task force identified 25 on-street miles and 5 off-street miles. The goal was to connect residential areas to popular destinations like parks, job centers, the downtown, libraries, schools, and public swimming pools.

Most of the on-street system is now in place through signing and striped bike lanes. "It was a challenge trying to retrofit existing streets and there was a fair amount of objection early on," says Haese. One issue was the challenge of learning to drive next to bikes. The city responded with an extensive educational program in the first couple years.

"I think we've gotten through that and the majority of people are happy, both users and people driving next to them," says Haese. "The system is used extensively." With the plan in place, the city has been routinely adding bicycle facilities during reconstruction projects, like the new railroad overpass that now has both a sidewalk and a striped bike lane. Last year they connected a new neighborhood without sidewalks to a nearby school by building an off-street trail as part of a street reconstruction project.



This new bicycle/pedestrian bridge crosses the Rock River in Jefferson.

"Having a plan is definitely important," says Haese. "It puts everyone involved with street reconstruction on notice. It helps make sure bike and pedestrian facilities don't get overlooked in the design phase."

A practical way to get around

Bike paths and sidewalks are not just for Sunday outings. More and more people routinely ride or walk to work, and in some unexpected places. Up north the Wisconsin River Trail links paper mills and downtown commercial areas in Wisconsin Rapids and several nearby communities. The 25 mile loop is about half completed.

"It's a big commuting trail," says Gary Popelka, Wood County planner. "We're actually getting a number of pedestrians and quite a few bicyclists commuting to paper mills and other areas."

In Marshfield, the state DOT is building a trail as part of a Hwy 13 reconstruction. The city will pay to extend the trail into its new Mill Creek business park.

"Citizens are asking for it," says Popelka.

Building bikeways to schools reduces parent and student car trips. In Waupaca, a trail opened last summer connecting a new high school and outdoor sports complex on the westerly edge of the city to the major residential and commercial areas. "It lets high school students bike or walk and provides safe passage under Highway 10 using an existing highway under-pass," says Greg Stelmacher, Wis-

continued on page 8

Inside

Idea Exchange: Diversity is the way to go with mowing equipment	2
Mow-Ho! Managing roadside vegetation	2
Adding water to ready mixed concrete	4
How to do a slump test	4
Superpave use now common	5
Wisconsin adopts sign rules	6
Calendar	6
Resources	7

Bikeways from page 1

DOT District 4 local programs manager. "It's a real improvement in safety."

In the Village of McFarland, near Madison, a new path has saved money for the school district. The school board was able to end busing to an isolated subdivision once the children had a safe route to the nearby elementary school.

Public support grows, opposition melts

Getting a bicycle system started can be an uphill battle at times, especially in rural areas. Local officials are cost-conscious and landowners are concerned about litter, vandalism, and invasion of privacy.

"The hardest part of the trail to get done is the first mile," says Gary Popelka. "When we proposed a trail near Wisconsin Rapids, one county supervisor was literally hollering against it. 'We don't need it. It's a waste of money. Nobody rides bicycles any more.' Now he's on the finance committee and one of our supporters." These days landowners near the Wisconsin River Trail promote the fact in ads when they sell their homes.



PHOTO CREDIT: BICYCLE FEDERATION OF WISCONSIN

Down south in the City of Jefferson, citizens helped raise money for a new bike/ped bridge across the Rock River into the downtown commercial district. The city engineer secured a WisDOT Enhancement Grant to pay for 80% of the bridge's \$500,000 cost. The city had agreed to finance the other 20%, but the Council later pulled back, saying they could only pay for 10%.

"Business people and citizens sold bricks to raise the other \$50,000!" says Dave McCosh, enhancements coordinator in WisDOT District 1. "When I pass through town, I drive down just to look at it. It's the prettiest bridge you ever saw."

There are many resources to help communities plan, design, and install bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The state budget provides \$7 million per year for transportation enhancement projects. Most goes to bike/ped projects. WisDOT invests at a similar level in bike-related improvements and sidewalks as part of highway and bridge construction projects. April 12, 2002, is the deadline for enhancement grant proposals for 2004 and 2005 projects.

AASHTO has updated the *Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities* which has useful planning, design and construction information for bike facilities. WisDOT expects to complete guides for both bicycle and pedestrian facilities this year.

For information on enhancement grant proposals, contact your WisDOT District office or Tom Huber, State Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, 608/267-7757. Check the WisDOT web page www.dot.state.wi.us under "Programs and Services" for information and useful links. Various resources are also available through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for the development of recreational trails. Many knowledgeable people in county and city planning departments are also willing to advise and assist.

Address incorrect?
Please call or write us with
the correct information

Route To

Do not use for return mail

Nonprofit Organization	
U.S. Postage	
PAID	
Madison, Wisconsin	
Permit No. 658	

TRANSPORTATION Information Center — LTAP
University of Wisconsin—Madison
College of Engineering
432 North Lake Street
Madison, WI 53706

