



**BICYCLE FRIENDLY
COMMUNITY**

BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY FEEDBACK REPORT

Spring 2013



Photo: Trek

Takoma Park, MD

The Bicycle Friendly Community review committee was impressed with the growing commitment to make **Takoma Park** a great place for bicyclists. The **Honorable Mention** given by the reviewers reflects their view that some of the key building blocks of creating a Bicycle Friendly Community are in place.

Particular **highlights** were Takoma Park's street grid, Bike the Boundaries, Bike Month celebrations, Sligo Creek Trail, closing of Sligo Creek Parkway on Sundays, and the Safe Routes to School program.

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

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

- Having an official Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) that meets frequently is critical to build public support for bicycle improvements as it ensures that the bicycle program is held accountable by citizens. It creates a systematic method for ongoing citizen input into the development of important policies, plans, and projects. BACs should be involved in developing relevant policy and planning documents, setting priorities, reviewing annual bicycle program work plans, and reviewing major public and private projects. Ensure that the members of the committee reflect the diversity and ability levels of cyclists in your community. See [this guide](#) to forming a Bicycle Advisory Committee.
- Increase the amount of [high quality bicycle parking](#) at popular destinations such as schools, recreational and entertainment facilities, retail stores, office buildings, and churches throughout the community. Particularly business districts including Flower Avenue and the Langley Crossroads area are in need of more and better bike parking facilities. Regulations that require bike parking, e.g. for new developments, can secure private funding. See the bicycle parking ordinances of [Madison, Wisconsin](#) and [Santa Cruz, California](#). Also consider adding some [artistic bike racks](#) to enhance the sense of place of your community.

Benefits of Further Improving Takoma Park for Cycling

- Continue to expand the bike network and to increase network connectivity through the use of different types of [bike lanes](#) and [shared lane arrows](#). Particularly Grant Avenue between Maple Avenue and the Takoma Park Middle School/Takoma Park Elementary School is in need of designated bicycle infrastructure that allows two-way bicycle movement. 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.
- 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.
- Encourage local public agencies, businesses and organizations to promote cycling to the workplace year-round 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, more bike parking in prime locations

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.

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.

- Ensure that police officers report cyclist crash data and potential hazards to the public works department, traffic engineers and transportation planners to timely identify sites in need of safety improvements for cyclists.

Menu of additional recommendations to further promote bicycling:

Engineering

Low hanging fruit and fast results

- Adopt a [Complete Streets](#) policy and offer implementation guidance. By adopting a Complete Streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right-of-way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists – making your community a better place to live.

- Consider passing an ordinance or policy that would require larger employers to provide shower facilities and other end-of-trip amenities.
- Work with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to expand access to suitable public lands for mountain bicyclists. Ensure to connect any off-road trails and facilities to your bicycle network.
- Implement broader transportation policies and programs that encourage alternative transportation choices, such as maximum/no minimum car parking standards or shared-parking allowances to complement your community's infrastructure investments and programs.
- Adequately maintain your on and off road bicycle infrastructure to ensure usability and safety. Increase the frequency of sweepings and address potholes and other hazards faster. Also, make sure to repaint your existing bicycle infrastructure regularly, e.g. the sharrows on Maple Avenue need to be repainted.
- Improve the visibility of the Sligo Creek Trail by installing street name signs at trail/roadway intersections similar to what has been installed in nearby Chillum, MD along the same trail.
- Continue to implement the plan to provide improved bicycle destination signage and a marked network of bikeways.

Long Term Goals

- 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 the Maryland State Highway Bicycle Policy and Design Guidelines as well as the standards and guidelines in Chapter 9- Traffic Control for Bicycle Facilities of the Maryland Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 for adults regularly or encourage a local bicycle advocacy group, the Takoma Park-Silver Spring campus of Montgomery College or a local bike 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 League Cycling Instructor (LCI) seminar to increase the number of certified LCIs in your community. Having local instructors will enable your

community to expand cycling education, recruit knowledgeable cycling ambassadors, deliver education to motorists, provide cycling education to adults and kids, and have experts available to assist in encouragement programs. Visit <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/> for more information.

Long Term Goals

- Work with the District Court to develop a bicyclist and motorist 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.
- Increase your efforts to ensure your bicycle education programs reach traditionally underserved populations, particularly seniors, women, minorities, and the disabled.

Encouragement

Low hanging fruit and fast results

- Expand encouragement efforts during Bike Month in partnership with local bicycle advocacy groups. Host, sponsor and encourage bicycle-themed community events, campaigns and programs. Increase your efforts

on Bike to Work Day and Bike to School Day. Ensure to widely advertise all bicycle-themed community events and programs. For ideas and more information, visit <http://www.bikeleague.org/content/national-bike-month>.

- Host, sponsor and/or encourage a 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 bicycle fashion show (stylish alternatives to spandex), 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.
- Set up and promote a bicycle-themed community celebration or social ride each time a new bicycle related project is completed. This is a great way to show off the community’s good efforts and introduces new users to the improvement.
- Encourage Montgomery College's Takoma Park-Silver Spring campus to promote cycling, to seek recognition through the [Bicycle Friendly University program](#), and ensure that their next facility master plan update is consistent with SB 977. 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.

- Establish a youth recreation or intervention program centered on bicycling, such as an Earn a Bike or Recycle a Bike program. See what the Community Cycling Center in Portland, OR does:
<http://www.communitycyclingcenter.org/>
- Promote bicycling more visibly, e.g. use lamp post banners to celebrate bicycling and spread safety messages

Long Term Goals

- Allow bicycles to utilize the skate park. Recreational bicycling can also be promoted through specific 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.
- Implement the plan to expand Capital Bikeshare into Takoma Park. 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.

Enforcement

Low hanging fruit and fast results

- Ensure that police officers are initially and repeatedly educated on the “Share the Road” message and traffic law as it applies to bicyclists and motorists. The Maryland Department of Transportation in conjunction with the Maryland State Police and the Maryland Highway Safety Office is finalizing a police training video on bicycle traffic law and bicycle crash investigation based on Maryland law for both entry level and in-service training for sworn officers that will likely be available in 2014. In the meantime, training is offered by the International Police Mountain Bike Association, the Law Enforcement Bicycle Association and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Here are some recommended Law Enforcement Products: Bicycle Safety [seminar](#); National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [video](#); Law Enforcement's [Roll Call Video: “Enforcing Law for Bicyclists”](#); and [Enhancing Bicycle Safety: Law Enforcement’s Role](#) (CD-ROM Training).
- 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.

- 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.

Evaluation/Planning

Low hanging fruit and fast results

- Continue to actively involve the local bicycle community in community planning efforts, policy development and public outreach, and to work with bicycle advocacy groups including WABA and MoBike along with individual bicycle advocates.

- Regularly conduct research on bicycle usage beyond the U.S. Census’ Journey to Work report to more efficiently distribute resources according to demand. Conduct yearly counts using automated and manual counters in partnership with advocacy organizations. Consider participating in the [National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project](#).
- Routinely conduct pre/post evaluations of bicycle-related projects in order to 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).

- Implement a community-wide trip reduction program or ordinance. See good examples [here](#).
- Establish a mechanism that ensures that bicycle facilities and programs are implemented in traditionally underserved neighborhoods.

Long Term Goals

- Develop a local [comprehensive bike plan](#) in close collaboration with the community to ensure public

involvement, information and ownership. Focus on developing a seamless cycling network that creates short distances between residential areas and popular destinations such as schools, commercial areas, recreational facilities, cultural resources and transit stops. Complement infrastructure planning with encouragement, education, and enforcement programs to increase usage. Develop a clear vision statement and set ambitious but attainable targets. The overarching goal should be to encourage residents to bike more often for recreation and transportation.

- Ensure that there is dedicated funding for the implementation of the bicycle master plan.

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