



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION - A PLAN FOR 2020



In light of rising gasoline prices, environmental concerns, increasing traffic congestion, and health concerns, bicycling has proven to be a cost efficient and convenient method of exercise and transportation. The vision for bicycling in Austin is to transform Austin into a world-class bicycling city. In order to accomplish this, the Austin 2009 Bicycle Plan Update aims to simultaneously increase bicycle use and bicycle safety. Through a comprehensive approach of improving and expanding the bicycle network and system, the needed education and promotional programs, and the enforcement of laws affecting bicycling, Austin is taking the necessary steps to becoming a world-class bicycling city.

IMMEDIATE ACTION STEPS

There are a number of immediate steps that the Bicycle Program and City of Austin should act on in order to facilitate and accelerate implementation of this Plan. First, staffing is a necessary component of implementing the Plan. Currently, the Bicycle Program coexists with the Pedestrian Program, and these two programs share a seven-person staff. Best practice cities contain an average of 8.3 staff persons for a combined bicycle and pedestrian program. And a self evaluation by the current bicycle and pedestrian team suggests that an addition of at least two full time staff and additional part time interns are necessary to aggressively implement this Bicycle Plan. The new staff would focus mainly on project management, promotion, education, and enforcement.



Secondly, the Bicycle Program needs to start regularly collecting data from surveys, ridership counts, mode splits, etc, and establish the method now for future data collection. This is imperative in order to set a base for the benchmark measures outlined in this Plan as well as to continuously monitor progress of Plan implementation.

Another critical step the City of Austin needs to act on immediately is updating the Transportation Criteria Manual and Land Development Code to reflect objectives and goals of this Plan. Many actions mentioned in this Plan rely on implementing the bicycle network with other road projects and/or private developments. Without the enforceable regulations in place to ensure this, many key opportunities to develop the bicycle network might be lost.

Finally, the Bicycle Program and city should immediately start implementing the Education and Promotion element of this plan, which is necessary to attracting new bicycle users. As bicycling becomes more common, it becomes more important that bicyclists and motorists



are aware of each other and of the laws pertinent to bicycling on streets. Educational and promotional materials should be created, published, and distributed soon to begin disseminating information regarding bicycle commuting and associated rights and responsibilities. Strengthening the “Share the Road” Campaign to include advertising at a larger scale such as billboards, bus wraps, and TV and radio ads will be important to educating motorists of the presence of bicyclists.

These first steps are essential to the foundation upon which the rest of the Plan can be implemented smoothly and completely over the next few years.

The Austin Bicycle Plan is a living document, and therefore should be updated periodically to assess progress, identify new opportunities, and re-evaluate priorities and goals. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center indicates that plans are typically updated every five years, but not exceeding 10 to 15 years (www.bicyclinginfo.org, retrieved 08/28/08).

As more people move into the downtown area and closer to their work, propensity for automobile use decreases and there’s a stronger need to facilitate alternative modes of transportation, such as bicycling. The City of Austin has seen a population growth of 86,512 since 2000. Over 70,000 new dwelling units have been constructed, including over 2,000 new condominium and apartment units in the central business district. Several more mixed use projects with residential units and retail services are planned and under construction in the downtown area over the next several years. This level of growth is expected to continue, making the efficient and effective implementation and evaluation of this Plan and its benchmarks vital to the creation of a bicycle system that provides transportation and recreational opportunities while serving the demands brought forth by growth and development.

A thorough plan evaluation investigates the achievement of objectives using quantifiable measures, reviews the effectiveness of particular interventions and policies, monitors public opinion, and then reassesses the specific program plan. As a result, specific program actions can be modified to strengthen implementation of the plan.

Lastly, this Plan cannot be implemented solely by the City Bicycle Program. Many objectives and action items rely on coordination, collaboration, partnerships, and sometimes even funding from other internal and external departments and agencies. This plan will serve to guide the City Bicycle Program into the future and give charge to the momentum it gained upon the passing of the previous plans in late 1990’s.





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APPENDICES