

CIM Bikeways White Paper Outline

I. Overall goal of bikeways

The goal of transportation planning is to move people to their respective destinations. Bicycles are one transportation mode which needs to be planned for. The purpose of the bikeway element in the Long Range Transportation Plan is to improve the environment for bicyclists so this can be a viable transportation option for people.

Improving the transportation environment for bicyclists is not new. As a matter of fact, the bicycle is credited with sparking a transportation revolution and its popularity at the turn of the Century spurred interest in the nation's roads. In 1880, the League of American Wheelmen (LAW), with 100,000 members, was successful in getting roads paved before the reign of automobiles.



It wasn't until 1908 and the introduction of the Model T that the federal government became more involved in road development, leading to passage of the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916.

The bicycle has played a big part in the history of Idaho as well. Owning a bicycle at the turn of the century was a status symbol for some, a method of getting products to market for the Chinese, a mode of transport for the military in Coeur d'Alene, a sign of increased freedom for women, and was even used by the back country miners (a precursor to the mountain bike).



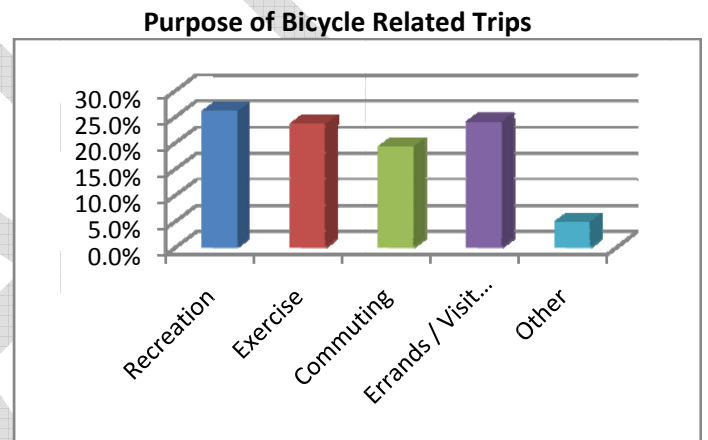
Ada County has a long history of bicycle transportation planning dating back to the early 1970s. During this time local governments focused their efforts on a multi-use pathway along the Boise River and bike lanes on some roadways. In the 1980s both of these efforts were dormant until the 1990s when growth and increased traffic raised the awareness of alternative transportation needs. The Ridge-to-Rivers Plan was adopted in 1993, which outlined a plan to expand the on-street bikeway and multi-use pathway system. Since that time the number of on-street bikeway miles has more than doubled and several key connections have been made along the Boise River Greenbelt.

II. Does bicycling really deserve inclusion in a transportation plan in this age of the automobile?

Maybe a better way to answer that question is to imagine just the opposite. What kind of community would we have if the only form of transportation was the automobile? Want to visit a friend; get in the car. Need a gallon of milk; grab the keys. Imagine the cost of infrastructure, maintenance, and community deterioration where no one can walk, bike, or take public transit. Yes, the bicycle is a legitimate mode of transportation and bikeways to accommodate this mode are important for a growing and vibrant community.

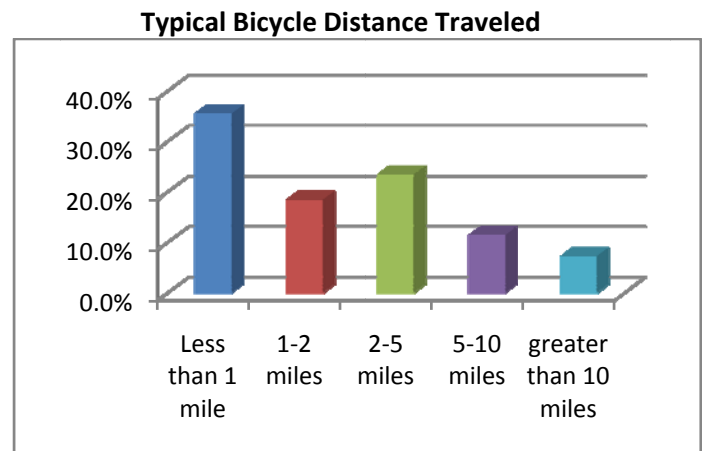
The key is designing the proper facility for a desired use; just as we do for roadways. Granted this is a little more challenging because bicyclists' skills differ more than motorists' skills. Most cars can go 60 mph but bicyclists come in all sorts of skills and abilities.

However, there is one constant shared by motorist and bicyclist alike; the purpose of our trips. Quite often bicycling is thought of in terms of recreation and motorized travel as utilitarian, but in reality many motorized trips are recreational: motorcycle rides, cruising the strip on a Saturday night, a drive to the park. And many bicycle trips are utilitarian. So, from a "purpose of trip" standpoint, motorists and bicyclists are the same. A vibrant community plans for both.

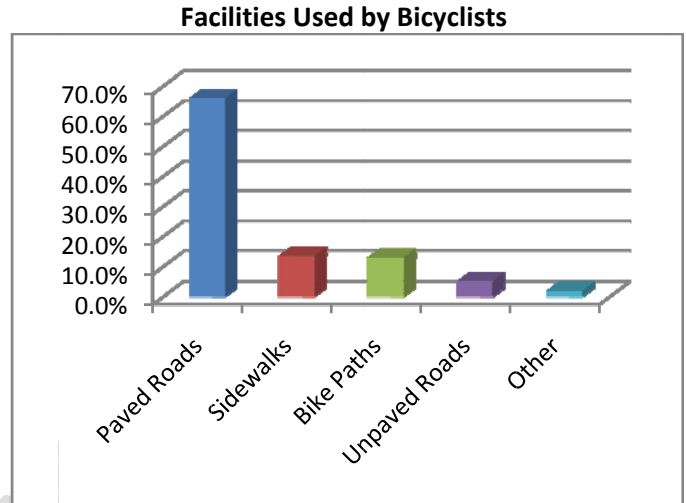


Source: The 2002 National Survey of Pedestrian and Bicyclist Attitudes and Behaviors.

One big difference between motorists and bicyclists is the distance traveled. Because bicyclists expend their own energy and are more exposed to the elements, the travel distance is typically shorter. Providing facilities that allow the shortest distance between two points is equally, if not more, important to bicyclists as it is for motorists. Requiring bicyclists to ride miles out of their way to reach a destination is a sure fire way to discourage bicycling as a form of transportation.



Proper bicycle facility design to fit the intended use may be one of the most important ways that communities can improve the safety, accessibility and use of roads for bicyclists. Contrary to popular belief, most bicycle accidents do not involve motor vehicles and most bicycling takes place on public roads. Designing roads that accommodate both bicyclists and motorists is safer and more cost effective than trying to design off road facilities. That is why bicycle transportation is an important component of the long range transportation plan.



Following are the three main categories of bicycle facilities in the long range transportation plan:

- **On-Street Bike Lanes** – These are striped lanes on the roadway for experienced cyclists who know how to ride in traffic. They serve as (relatively) high speed corridors that allow bicyclist to reach destinations in a direct manner. Bike lanes provide more visibility of bicyclists to the motorist and thus become part of the traffic scene.
- **On-Street Bike Routes** – These typically work on low volume roadways that make connections to the on-street bike lanes and multiple-use paths without the use of any special treatment. They can exist through suburban areas or on rural roads with paved shoulders.
- **Off-Street Multiple-Use Path** – These are facilities separated from the roadway such as the Boise River Greenbelt. They work best with limited access much like the freeway. They do not work well along commercial strips with multiple access points. (Sidewalks are not considered multiple-use paths as they typically contain many access points such as driveways and are intended for pedestrians.)

Because of the speed differentials, it's best to provide three separate facilities for the three forms of modern human mobility; roads for motorists, bike lanes (on the roads) for bicyclists, sidewalks for pedestrians (including those walking to transit stops).



III. Current status

Ada County now has more than 180 miles of on-street bike lanes and nearly 50 miles of bike routes. These are administered by the Ada County Highway District, which has a new bicycle master plan: “Roadways to Bikeways”. Many of the City jurisdictions in Ada and Canyon Counties have bikeway or pathway plans incorporated into their respective planning process. There is also a consortium of agencies actively pursuing the Boise River Greenbelt expansion into and through Canyon County.

IV. Future

Many people recognize the value in providing options for bicycle travel. To continue meeting this need, bicyclists need safe facilities that are well connected to destinations. Improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities typically increase the use of public transit as well. A cultural change is also necessary to make walking and bicycling effective choices. A ten mile bicycle commute is not that difficult; it’s just different than the cultural norm. This Long Range Transportation Plan will address the integration of all these mobility options into the transportation system.

