

Feedback

Bicycle Friendly Community Application

Sitka, AK

Spring 2012





The League of American Bicyclists has designated **Sitka, AK** as a Bicycle Friendly Community at the **Bronze** level, because Sitka exhibits a strong commitment to cycling that is still in its beginning stages. The reviewers felt that there is still “room to grow”, but that notable steps are being made in the right direction:

- *Engineering:* Sitka recently implemented a policy to engineer streets with the consideration of bicyclists. Community and transportation planners, and civil engineers receive training in bicycle and pedestrian planning and engineering. The majority of destinations have bike racks, some of which are covered. Most public buses are equipped with bike racks. Sixty percent of roads accommodate bicycles.
- *Education:* All elementary, middle and high schools have Safe Routes to School programs. The community has recently educated motorists and bicyclists on sharing the road safely through public service announcements, bike ambassadors and blogs on cycling. Traffic Skills 101 classes, Cycling Skills classes and Commuter classes are offered regularly in the community.
- *Encouragement:* Sitka promotes National Bike Month through public service announcements, a Bike Month events guide, a commuter challenge and commuter breakfasts. Sitka celebrates cycling outside of Bike Month through community rides, public service announcements, trail construction/maintenance days and a commuter challenge.
- *Enforcement:* Sitka has an identified law-enforcement point person to interact with cyclists. There are specific penalties for failing to yield to a cyclist when turning and/or it is illegal to park or drive in a bike lane (intersections excepted). There are penalties for motor vehicle users that 'door' cyclists. There is a ban on texting while driving.
- *Evaluation & Planning:* Bicycle mode share is high (4.9%). The community has low number of cyclist/motor vehicle crashes. Sitka has a bicycle master plan and meets annual targets for bike plan implementation.

Particular **highlights** were the Share-the-road flier; Be Safe Be Seen campaign; library safe cycling education window displays; lunch-and-learn presentations during Bike Month; Sitka Winter Cycling Celebration; all-weather cycling workshop; "Bike to the Boots"; Julie Hughes Triathlon; and the Tour de Sitka.

Reviewers were very pleased to see the current efforts, potential and commitment to make Sitka a great place for bicyclists which can be seen in the growing number of cyclists. The BFC review team expects great things in the future given the good local team and the coming improvements to the network and programs.

Below, reviewers provided recommendations to further promote bicycling in Sitka in the short and long term. 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.

The key measures Sitka should take to improve cycling in the community are:

- Having an effective Bicycle Advisory Committee is critical to building public support for bicycle improvements. An effective committee ensures that the program will be accountable to citizens. It creates a systematic method for ongoing citizen input into development of important policies, plans, and projects. BACs should be involved in developing relevant policy and planning documents, setting priorities, reviewing annual pedestrian program work plans, and reviewing major public and private projects. See [this guide](#) to forming a Bicycle Advisory Committee.
- Expanding the bicycle and pedestrian manager’s time focused on these projects would help in scaling up your BFC efforts. This staff person could assist the new Bicycle Advisory Committee by devoting their time to acquiring bike/ ped grants and making the community bicycle-friendly. See this report on the importance of Bicycle & Pedestrian program staff. http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/reports/pdfs/why_bike_ped_staff_april_2010.pdf
- Develop an updated [comprehensive bike plan](#) in close collaboration with the community to ensure public involvement, information and ownership. Focus on developing/completing a seamless cycling network that emphasizes and 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 increase the percentage of trips made by bicycle in the community. Ensure that there is dedicated funding for the implementation of the bicycle master plan.
- Ensure that police officers are initially and repeatedly educated on the “Share the Road” message and bicycle-related traffic law as it applies to bicyclists and motorists. Trainings we recommend are offered by the International Police Mountain Bike Association, the Law Enforcement Bicycle Association and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



You can find an example of a good Bicycle Safety seminar here:

http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/bikesafe/case_studies/casestudy.cfm?CS_NUM=801. See the video put out by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/menuitem.810acaee50c651189ca8e410dba046a0/> Here are some Law Enforcement Products: Law Enforcement's Roll Call Video: "Enforcing Law for Bicyclists"; Enhancing Bicycle Safety: Law Enforcement's Role (CD-ROM Training); Training provided by the International Police Mountain Biking Association: <http://www.ipmba.org/instructors.htm>

- Promote, host, sponsor and/or encourage a variety of bicycle-themed, fun and family-friendly 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 kids triathlon, a bicycle fashion show (fashionable alternatives to lycra), a Halloween bike decoration competition, a bike to the arts event, etc. Work closely with local bicycle advocacy groups, bike clubs, bike shops, bike teams and schools. Provide appropriate safety measures such as road closures or police escorts.

Reviewers provided the following menu of recommendations to further promote bicycling:

Engineering

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Ensure that new and improved bicycle facilities conform to current best practices and guidelines – such as the [NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide](#), [AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities](#) and your DOT's own guidelines. Consider innovative bicycle infrastructure such as bicycle tracks, contra-flow bike lanes or colorful bike lanes.
- Ensure that the standards for bike parking conform to APBP guidelines: http://www.apbp.org/resource/resmgr/publications/bicycle_parking_guidelines.pdf
- Consider hosting a [Smart Cycling](#) course for city staff to better understand cyclists' needs, behavior, and their right to use city streets as well as multi-use paths for transportation. Your local bicycle advocacy group are a great resource for this kind of training.
- Consider a membership to the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals www.apbp.org for city Bicycle and Pedestrian Staff. Training opportunities and the listserv provided by this organization are excellent resources.
- Install way-finding signage at strategic locations around the community. Here are some best practices from the Washington, DC area Council of Governments: <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/t1dZW1k20070516090831.pdf>



- Improve the coordination and communication between city departments and state paving and rehabilitation projects and facilities maintenance. Consider offering oversight to state DOT staff and contractors working within municipal boundaries. Ensure that facility design follows current best practice and that they are properly installed.
- Consider measuring the bicycle level of service (LOS) 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” in the network, 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).

Long Term Goals:

- Since arterial and collector roads are the backbone of every transportation network, it is essential to increase the number of wide shoulders or [bike lanes](#) along these roads to allow bicyclists of all skill levels to reach their destinations quickly and safely.
- Continue to expand the bike network and increase network connectivity through the use of bike lanes, bike tracks, shared lane arrows, signed routes and bicycle cut-throughs. On-street improvements coupled with the expansion of the off-street system will continue to increase use and improve safety. 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.
- Continue to increase the amount of [secure bicycle parking](#) at popular destinations such as transit stops, schools, recreation and entertainment facilities, retail and office clusters and churches throughout the community. Regulations that require bike parking, e.g. as part of new developments, can secure private funding for bike parking. See bicycle parking ordinances of [Madison, Wisconsin](#) and [Santa Cruz, California](#).
- Develop a system of bicycle boulevards that creates an attractive, convenient, and comfortable cycling environment welcoming to cyclists of all ages and skill levels. See more on how to do it at <http://www.ibpi.usp.pdx.edu/guidebook.php>

Education

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- It is vital to make motorists and cyclists aware of their rights and responsibilities on the road. Continue to expand public education campaigns to promote the share the road message and the rights and responsibilities of all users, e.g. through share the road street signs or a dedicated bike page on community website.



- Add bicycling and motorist education messages to local routine activities such as drivers licensing and testing, or include inserts in utility bills.
- Start a bicyclist and motorist ticket diversion program focused on bicycle safety. Road users given citation are offered an opportunity to waive fees for violations by attending a bicycling education course. This should include a classroom and on-road component. See what Pima County has done: [http://bikeped.pima.gov/Safety%20\(pdf\)s/April%20-%20May%202011%20Bicycle%20Diversion%20Class%20\(No%20Locations\).pdf](http://bikeped.pima.gov/Safety%20(pdf)s/April%20-%20May%202011%20Bicycle%20Diversion%20Class%20(No%20Locations).pdf)
- Education on bicycling is not only important for bicyclists but for all road users - including motorists. Start a motorist education programs for professional drivers such as bus and taxi drivers in the city. See what San Francisco has done <http://www.sfbike.org/?drivertraining> Classes can be offered by League Cycling Instructors or local bicycle advocates and material is available through the League of American Bicyclists.

Encouragement

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Encourage more local businesses to promote cycling to the workplace and to seek recognition through the *Bicycle Friendly Business* program. Businesses will profit from a [healthier, happier and more productive workforce](#) while the community would potentially profit from some bicycle-active businesses as well: increasing the bicycle mode share, less commuter traffic, better air quality, public bike parking in prime locations provided by businesses, new and powerful partners in advocating for bike infrastructure and programs on the local, state and federal level, and public bike events, skills and maintenance classes hosted or sponsored by businesses. The city should be the model employer for the rest of the community. For more information about the free program please visit <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/bicyclefriendlybusiness/>.
- Consider passing an ordinance or local code that would require larger employers to provide [bicycle parking](#), shower facilities, and other end-of-trip amenities.
- Encourage local institutions of higher education to promote cycling and to seek recognition through the [Bicycle Friendly University](#) program. College and university campuses are unique environments for their high density, stimulating atmosphere and defined boundaries. These factors make them ideal environments to incorporate bikes. Many colleges and universities have built upon these good conditions and embraced the enthusiasm for more bicycle-friendly campuses by incorporating bike share programs, bike co-ops, clubs, bicycling education classes and policies to promote bicycling as a preferred means of transportation. The community could potentially profit as well: Communities near a BFU such as Stanford or University of California at Davis have a very high number of regular bicyclists (as many students bike to campus, shops and restaurants), less congestion around campus, safer streets and university-hosted public bicycle events, programs and



classes.” See what Stanford University is doing for cyclists:

http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/communities/bfc_stanford_university.php

- Actively involve the local bicycle community in community planning efforts, policy development and public outreach.
- Set up and promote bicycle-themed community celebrations and/or rides each time the community completes a new bicycle related project. This is a great way to show off the city’s good efforts and introduces new users to the improvement.
- Design and publish several updated local bike maps in paper and online, addressing diverse needs and skill levels (commuter, visitor, sport cyclist, mountain biker etc). Each map should outline the existing on and/or off road bicycle network by infrastructure type and skill level (if applicable). In addition, maps could identify the location of landmarks, greenways, low-traffic streets, public restrooms, bike routes, designated scenic routes, bike stations, bike repair stations, bike parking and transit stations. See Portland, Oregon’s commuter bike map:
<http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=39402&a=322407>
- Consider offering a ‘Ciclovia’ or ‘Summer Streets’ type event, closing off a major corridor to auto traffic and offering the space to cyclists, pedestrians and group exercise events.
<http://cicloviarecreativa.uniandes.edu.co/english/index.html>
- Consider partnering with a local bicycle advocacy group or bike club to launch a bike buddy or bicyclist mentorship program for inexperienced riders. A bike mentorship program that teams experienced cyclists with newcomers is a great way to encourage and educate novice commuters. See what Spokane, Wash. and Charlotte, N.C. are doing
<http://groups.google.com/group/bikementor>,
<http://www.spokanebicycleclub.org/bikebuddy.htm>

Long Term Goals

- Develop a series of short (2-5 mi.) (themed) loop rides around the community and provide appropriate way-finding signage. Integrate these rides into local bike maps.
- Recreational bicycling can be promoted through facilities and programs like mountain bike parks, cyclocross course or similar bicycle amenities. Ensure that the facilities are accessible by bicycle, so that there is no need to drive to ride.



Enforcement

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Invite a police officer to become an active member of the bicycle advisory committee.
- Actively facilitate stronger connections between bicycle advocates, the wider bicycling community and law enforcement. Increase the number of police officers patrolling multi-use paths *and* streets on bike, as it gives officers a better understanding of the conditions for cyclists and keeps secluded multi-use paths safe.

Evaluation/Planning

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- 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. We also strongly encourage you to participate in the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project: <http://bikepeddocumentation.org/>.
- Consider implementing a trip reduction program/ordinance. See good examples at <http://bikepeddocumentation.org/> and <http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=43801>
- Consider conducting an economic impact study on bicycling in your community. See what Portland, OR has done: http://www.altaplanning.com/App_Content/files/fp_docs/2008%20Portland%20Bicycle-Related%20Economy%20Report.pdf
- Integrate the implementation of the bike plan into the master plan, all land use plans, zoning ordinances and larger development projects.

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