

2. The Importance of Bicycling and Walking

Bicycling and walking are both important forms of transportation and recreation that provide numerous benefits to individuals and communities as a whole.

Bicycling and walking are good forms of exercise and are nonpolluting forms of transportation that are accessible to all. By encouraging bicycling and walking participation, particularly for transportation, Pleasant Prairie can provide social, health and environmental benefits to its residents.

2.1 Social and Health Benefits

Bicycling offers low cost mobility. For those who do not use or have access to an automobile, such as school-age children, bicycling and walking are particularly important. While bicycling and walking may not replace all trips by motor vehicle, they can be a practical mode for many trips and part of multi-modal trips as well (such as a trip to a park-and-ride carpool facility or transit stop).

Increased bicycling levels along with increased quality and quantity of bicycle facilities can benefit the community by providing those unable to drive or without access to a car with more independence; reducing the need for parents to chauffeur their children to school, social and recreational activities; allowing households to meet their transportation needs with fewer cars; and increasing recreational opportunities and, by extension, improving public health.

A total of 76% of respondents to the survey conducted for this plan reported that they regularly walk or jog for exercise while 65% reported bicycling regularly for exercise. Clearly walking and bicycling are important forms of exercise for local residents. Improving bicycle facilities for transportation purposes benefits those who bicycle for recreation and fitness as well. Recreational bicycle rides can begin at home and be combined with other, often utilitarian, trip purposes. When linked with a larger bikeway system, off-street paths can provide important transportation linkages, and a complete bikeway network benefits everyone, regardless of how they use the road.



A sign near the RecPlex reminds motorists of pedestrian rights.

2.2 Environmental and Transportation Benefits

Bicycling is a convenient and efficient form of transportation, and for some, their primary mode of transportation. Bicycling is a popular mode of transportation because a bicycle provides its user with autonomy and flexibility regarding travel schedules and destinations, including multiple destinations. Bicycling is the most energy efficient form of transportation and is often faster than driving for short trips. Bicycling is an important element of a transportation system. Multi-modal trips allow commuters to use their bicycles to reach a bus stop or to ride to their final destination from a convenient parking area. Bicycling levels are much higher during the warmer months, and the development of inexpensive, more versatile bicycles and clothing have increased both the appeal and the practice of bicycling in wetter and colder weather.



Kenosha Transit buses accommodate up to two bikes on front racks.
Credit: Kenosha Transit

While travel within southeastern Wisconsin is predominantly by personal motor vehicle, walking and bicycle travel represent the next largest percentage of internal weekday travel by resident households of the region.

Although the Kenosha Transit bus system provides limited service to the LakeView Corporate Park and small portions of the north side of Pleasant Prairie, most of the residential areas in Pleasant Prairie are not served by transit. However, for the areas that are served, Kenosha Transit’s buses have bicycle racks on them which encourage multimodal trips by users.

Increasing bicycle opportunities improves the efficiency of the transportation system and increases environmental benefits. It improves neighborhood livability by reducing motor vehicle traffic and its associated pollution and congestion, reducing the need for motor vehicle parking and reducing motor vehicle crashes, injuries and property damage.

When compared to a motor vehicle, bicyclists take up very little roadway space. In most urban traffic conditions, bicyclists do not significantly limit traffic flow. Providing adequate roadway width for all users, including bicyclists, will increase roadway capacity, reduce congestion and decrease trip times for everyone.

2.3 Economic Opportunities

Improving the bicycling environment can provide non-transportation related benefits as well. The community benefits from bicycle riders who purchase food and other needs locally. The tourism industry benefits as more bicyclists are attracted from outside the community. Most importantly, the quality of life of the community is enhanced by the presence of bicyclists and pedestrians when social interactions occur spontaneously and when people feel safer being outdoors.

Bicycle facilities have been shown to have a positive effect on nearby property values¹ and an increase in business reported by owners of businesses near bicycle facilities.² A study by North Carolina's Department of Transportation of bicycle facilities in the Outer Banks reveals an annual economic impact from the facilities that is six times greater than the one-time capital costs.³ A Wisconsin study showed 39% of responding businesses indicated increased business as a result of users of the Fox River Trail. The same study showed that a bicycle facility had positive effects on real estate values and therefore property tax revenues. Lots adjacent to the Mountain Bay Trail in Brown County, Wisconsin, sold faster and for an average of 9% more than similar property not located next to the trail. The study also suggests that by providing workers an alternative to driving to work, the trail became an inexpensive alternative to increasing road capacity.⁴ The conclusion that trail facilities generate increased revenue through higher property values is corroborated by the Consumer's Survey on Smart Choices for Home Buyers. In that survey, trails ranked the second most important amenity out of a list of 18 choices.⁵



Buffered bicycle lanes add additional separation between travel lanes and the bicycle lane which increases cyclists' comfort level.

¹ National Association of Realtors and National Association of Builders, *Consumer's Survey on Smart Choices for Home Buyers*, April 2002.

² Runge, Cole. *Fox River Trail Study*, Prepared for the Brown County Planning Commission, December 2002.

³ Lawrie, Judson, John Guenther, Thomas Cook, and Mary Paul Meletiou. *The Economic Impact of Investments in Bicycle Facilities: A Case Study of the North Carolina Outer Banks*, summary report, April 2004.

⁴ Runge, Cole. *Fox River Trail Study*, Prepared for the Brown County (WI) Planning Commission, December 2001.

⁵ National Association of Realtors and National Association of Home Builders, *Consumer's Survey on Smart Choices for Home Buyers*, April 2002