

Looking to the Future: Bicycle Commuting in Philadelphia

A project of the Mayor's Internship Program Transportation Working Group

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Executive Summary

Background

Bicycles are gaining prominence nationally and locally as a viable means of commuting and are becoming a major part of many cities' transportation agendas. From a purely economic standpoint, rising fuel costs are making non-motorized transport a more attractive option. Furthermore, bicycle improvements tend to be low-cost options with very recognizable benefits. The environmental benefits of non-motorized transport are also clear, making bicycling a key element of any sustainability plan. Finally, bicycling offers many health benefits to a city's population, making it an attractive option to direct at all citizens but especially children.

Recommendations and Incentives

While Philadelphia has taken some steps to make its streets friendlier to bicyclists, more work needs to be done to encourage bike commuting in the city. The following recommendations and incentives should be implemented in a timely fashion in order to make Philadelphia a more bike-accessible city.

Short-term

1. Strictly enforce traffic laws that impact bicyclists, including speeding, blocking bike lanes, and failing to yield the right-of-way to a bicyclist when turning
2. Expand the city's bicycle network in a rational manner, with the goal of adding at least 100 miles of bike lanes citywide
3. Install more bike racks citywide
4. Install bike lockers at strategic points
5. Work with SEPTA to make mass transit more bike-friendly
6. Install bike-friendly sewer and manhole covers
7. Establish a bicycle safety task force

Long-term

8. Include requirements for indoor bicycle parking in the new zoning code
9. Build a bikestation in a central downtown location

Financial Incentives

1. Create a program to allow city employees to purchase bicycles and equipment at bicycle shops in Philadelphia utilizing pre-tax income
2. Explore providing a tax credit for employees who bike to work
3. Allow employees who bike to work to be paid for part of their transportation time
4. Create a rewards program to integrate cycling into the economic life of Philadelphians
5. Launch a marketing campaign highlighting the cost differences between commuting by car and bicycle

Safety Incentives

6. Give away free bike locks to those who participate in bike safety education programs
7. Create a database of registered bicycles
8. Create an accredited Philadelphia bicycle shop program

Education

9. Expand educational programs
10. Public recognition of cyclists
11. Launch a public health campaign to promote the benefits of cycling

I: Introduction

The Mayor's Internship Program Transportation Working Group has been charged with creating a plan and set of recommendations aimed at increasing the number of bike commuters in the city of Philadelphia, with a specific focus on municipal employees. This plan aims to fulfill the larger goal of making Philadelphia a model for alternative transportation. The following report includes a brief history of bicycling in Philadelphia and our recommendations for increasing bicycle commuting in the city.

II: Background

Bicycles are gaining prominence nationally and locally as a viable means of commuting and are becoming a major part of many cities' transportation agendas. However, the specific motivations for such a move are understandable through several lenses. From a purely economic standpoint, rising fuel costs are making non-motorized transport a more attractive option. Furthermore, bicycle improvements tend to be low-cost options with very recognizable benefits. The environmental benefits of non-motorized transport are also clear, making bicycling a key element of any sustainability plan. Finally, bicycling offers many health benefits to a city's population, making it an attractive option to direct at all citizens but especially children.

We will first explore the policies and initiatives that have already been applied in Philadelphia, providing the basis for our recommendations. The recommendations offer our take on how the city can build on previous bicycle successes to build a strong bicycle plan.

We encourage you to keep the City of Philadelphia's strategic plan and six core service areas in mind when considering this report, specifically the jobs and economic development and healthy and sustainable communities areas. Bicycle commuting will help Philadelphia grow as a greener city and make neighborhoods more vibrant and livable, helping the city to fulfill its mission.

Previous Work within the City

Before looking forward with future recommendations, we must look back to the work that has already been done and is still occurring to improve bicycling in the city.

The Streets Department and the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) developed a proposed bicycle network for the city to consist of at least 300 miles of bike lanes. Though the original plans called for these lanes on specific corridors, Streets has found it more efficient to examine the possibility of adding bike lanes to any street that it slated to be repaired. Following this process, the city currently has approximately 200 miles of bike lanes. The city has published a map of the bike lane network, which is also available on the Streets Department's Web site.

PCPC is also creating a Bicycle/Pedestrian Task Force to create a bicycle plan for the city, similar to plans developed by, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and other cities. This process is in the early stages as committees are being formed and consultants hired. Similar high-level coordination efforts are also occurring. The Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities is preparing to hire a bicycle/pedestrian coordinator and is developing a strategic agenda for the office. The Mayor's Director of Sustainability is also looking to develop a sustainability plan for the city.

Efforts have also been made to increase the availability of bike parking in the city. The Streets Department is about to begin installing 1,400-1,500 bike racks to kick off an Adopt-a-Rack program.

The Bicycle Coalition recently led a pilot to test the possibility of on-street bicycle parking. The Philadelphia Parking Authority is also examining possibilities for increased bike parking. They have launched a pilot program to install bike racks in several public garages in the Center City area and are examining the on-street concept as well.

Over the last few years, the concept of bike sharing has become popular in many global cities, most recently in Washington, DC. The organization Bike Share Philadelphia was created by interested parties to explore the feasibility of a bike-sharing program in Philadelphia. Currently no concrete plans have been created, and the organization is working on developing a workable business plan.

III: Recommendations

While Philadelphia has taken some steps to make its streets friendlier to bicyclists, more work needs to be done to encourage bike commuting in the city. The following recommendations should be implemented in a timely fashion in order to make Philadelphia a more bike-accessible city.

Short-term

1. Strictly enforce traffic laws that impact bicyclists, including speeding, blocking bike lanes, and failing to yield the right-of-way to a bicyclist when turning

A survey from the late 1990s found that speeding automobile traffic was the number one reason more Philadelphians don't bike to work. Speeding cars are more likely to strike motorists, and cars, buses and delivery trucks that block bike lanes force bicyclists to swerve into traffic to get around them. Strictly enforcing traffic laws will make the streets safer for bicyclists and motorists alike, as well as increasing revenue for the City of Philadelphia through increased ticketing.

In addition to targeting drivers, police should crack down on rogue bicyclists who flaunt traffic laws, endangering themselves and motorists.

2. Expand the city's bicycle network in a rational manner, with the goal of adding at least 100 miles of bike lanes citywide

Philadelphia does not currently have a master plan for expanding the city's bike network. When the Streets Department repaves streets, it assesses them for the feasibility of adding a bike lane, and installs lanes where appropriate, based on the width of the street and other factors. While this method has greatly expanded the city's bike lane network, the lanes do not form a cohesive system.

There are several priority areas which should be targeted for bike lanes. They include:

- Center City: There are no east-west bike lanes between Spring Garden Street and Washington Avenue, with the exception of the Ben Franklin Parkway. West Market Street, John F. Kennedy Boulevard, and Arch Street are all wide enough to accommodate a bike lane, which would provide a much-needed route across Center City
- Broad Street: There is no contiguous north-south bike route through Center City. Because of its width and heavy usage, Broad Street is a prime candidate for bike

lanes. Better bike access can boost business along the corridor, where it is often hard to find automobile parking. In South Philadelphia, median parking can be eliminated to fit bike lanes. In Center City, some reconfiguration may be necessary.

- Roosevelt Boulevard: Bike lanes can be painted in the outer lanes of the boulevard in the Northeast.
- Pattison Avenue: The street is amply wide to accommodate bike lanes and adding lanes would encourage biking to Sports Complex events.
- Temple University area: Many college students do not own cars and use bikes as their main mode of transportation. Unlike University City, which is relatively well-served by bike lanes, the Temple area has no bike lanes, except for a few blocks on Cecil B. Moore Avenue.
- Lower North Philadelphia: This area has virtually no bike lanes. This area has high poverty rates, and consequently many residents do not own cars. Installing bike lanes would make biking a more viable option for those who do not own cars, or for those who do but can no longer afford them due to rising gas prices.
- City Avenue: The center turning lane can be shrunk or eliminated to add bike lanes from St. Joseph's University east to Presidential Boulevard.

3. Install more bike racks citywide

The 1,400 Adopt-a-Rack locations are mainly concentrated in Center City, Queen Village, Tacony, Northern Liberties, and along commercial corridors including Girard Avenue, Frankford Avenue, 60th Street, Passyunk Avenue, Germantown Avenue, and Ridge Avenue.

The city should continue install even more bike racks, with the goal of installing at least one bike rack at every city-owned building and school. Working with SEPTA and PATCO, the city should ensure that there is at least one bike rack at every train, subway and el station in the city, as well as at major bus terminals. While many Philadelphians live too far from their place of work to ride their bike to work, they can more easily ride their bike to a SEPTA stop and use mass transit to get to work.

Large public assembly buildings (capacity of 3,000 or more) should be required to include ample bike parking.

When the Parking Authority converts blocks from single-space parking meters to multiple-space meters, the city should convert some obsolete meters into bike racks by adding loops to the poles to create space for two bicycles to park.

Proper signage directing cyclists to bike parking should be added.

The Managing Director's Office should require temporary bike racks as a requirement for obtaining a special events permit for large events (5,000 people or more). This will

encourage residents who otherwise would not attend the event due to lack of automobile parking to ride their bikes and attend the event.

4. Install bike lockers at strategic points

For those wary of bike theft—Philadelphia was rated the worst city in the country for bike thefts by Kryptonite, a bike lock company which conducts an annual survey—bike lockers provide extra security and peace of mind. Lockers also provide protection from the weather, allowing for more bike use in inclement weather. The city should install bike lockers at Dilworth Plaza, the Municipal Services Building and other high-traffic locations it deems appropriate.

5. Work with SEPTA to make mass transit more bike-friendly

In addition to improving bike parking at stations, the city should work with SEPTA to improve bike access on Regional Rail trains. SEPTA currently allows two bikes per train on weekdays (off-peak only), and five on weekends, regardless of the length of the train. This means that, on weekdays, whether the train is 1 car long or 7 cars long, only 2 bikes are allowed. The rules should be revised to allow 2 bikes per coach, not two bikes per train. In addition, bikes should be allowed on off-peak trains during peak hours, as they are often less crowded.

In addition to the aforementioned goal of placing at least one bike rack at every rail and major bus station, the city should work with SEPTA to erect enhanced bike parking—covered racks or bike lockers—at the stations with the heaviest bike usage. SEPTA traffic counters or other designated surveyors can determine which stations see the heaviest bike traffic and locate the enhanced parking accordingly.

Five SEPTA stations currently have bike lockers, including one (Fox Chase) in Philadelphia. 31 SEPTA stations have bike racks, but only five (Suburban Station, 30th Street Station, University City, Frankford Transportation Center, and Overbrook) are in Philadelphia.

6. Install bike-friendly sewer and manhole covers

Sewer covers with bars that run parallel to the direction of traffic are dangerous for bicyclists, whose tires can get caught in between the bars. The city should ensure that all grates are safe for bicyclists and that all metal street fixtures have non-skid surfaces.

7. Establish a bicycle safety task force

As previously mentioned, Philadelphia is the worst city for bike thefts in the country. A joint task force consisting of the Philadelphia Police Department, SEPTA Police, university police forces, Center City District, Streets Department, and other parties can make a concerted effort to reduce bike thefts, improve traffic safety, and address concerns of bicyclists that currently may take low priority in certain departments. This task force can work in conjunction with the already-existing Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Task Force.

One of the first tasks of the group should be to launch a public safety campaign specifically targeting drivers, educating them about the dangers automobiles present to cyclists. Drivers who are involved in a bicycle accident could be required to undergo additional bike safety training as part of a court order if the driver is found liable. Another possible tack could be to make driver's license renewals contingent upon completion of a bicycle awareness program.

The Police Department should also hold training sessions for cyclists to educate them in safe and legal riding and parking practices. Sessions would be voluntary, but mandatory for cyclists who are ticketed for a violation.

Long-term

8. Include requirements for indoor bicycle parking in the new zoning code

Indoor bike parking allows employees to ride to work during inclement weather, provides extra security and peace of mind, and increases convenience. The revised zoning code should include provisions that require new office buildings, apartment buildings, condominium towers and dormitories to include bicycle parking at street level. Furthermore, parking lots and garages should be required to include space for bicycle parking.

Owners of existing buildings should be encouraged to install indoor bike parking, although it is recognized that building design may restrict their ability to install bike parking indoors.

A comprehensive effort is necessary to increase bike commuting in Philadelphia, and institutionalizing bike-favorable practices in the zoning code is the best way to ensure that they become common practice.

9. Build a bikestation in a central downtown location

Bikestations provide secure indoor bike parking and amenities, which can include showers, maintenance, bike stores and rental facilities. Cities on the West Coast, as well as Chicago, have built bikestations, and Washington, DC plans to break ground soon on one next to Union Station. Bike parking can either be free or cost a nominal fee (\$1/day), and the facility should be staffed during all hours of operation. The bikestation will create jobs and can serve as the headquarters for a bike-sharing program, should the city create one.

a. Municipal Services Building

The MSB is centrally located to office buildings, mass transit and downtown and would not require much alteration to the landscape, as empty space already exists. It would be highly visible, encouraging more people to use it.

b. South Broad Street Concourse

A bikestation could be the centerpiece for the development of this underutilized space. It is centrally located to office buildings and downtown, and is easily accessible by mass transit, making it attractive for people who bring their bikes on trains and subways. However, because it is underground, it would be hurt by lack of visibility, and access improvements would be needed, as currently only two elevators service the concourse.

IV: Incentives

Financial

1. Create a program to allow city employees to purchase bicycles and equipment at bicycle shops in Philadelphia utilizing pre-tax income

Another option is to have employers purchase bicycles and equipment and lease them to employees for a set period of time, then selling them to the employees at market rate. This may be preferable, as it allows employers to acquire a tax write-down on the equipment while providing the employee with transportation at minimum monthly cost. This program can eventually be expanded to private employers.

2. Explore providing a tax credit for employees who bike to work

Verification that the employees are actually biking to work would be necessary, and could be accomplished by attaching barcode stickers to employees' bikes and scanning them every day they bike to work.

3. Allow employees who bike to work to be paid for part of their transportation time

Because biking to work can take longer than driving, employees can be paid for a set amount of transportation time—for example, 15 minutes. Alternatively, employees who bike to work could be allowed to arrive 15 minutes late or leave 15 minutes early while getting paid for those 15 minutes. Employees would have the option of accruing the time toward an early out on Fridays, leaving an hour early. Again, a verification mechanism would be required.

4. Create a rewards program to integrate cycling into the economic life of Philadelphians

This “PhillyBux” program could involve a city-issued card that could be swiped at certain city venues (stadiums, concert halls, businesses, places of work, participating locations, etc.) that individuals bike to (verification required) to accrue rewards points. The points could be redeemed at various locations, providing discounts or perks at bicycle shops, city merchants, sporting events, PhillyGear items, or even monetary compensation from the City or other entity. Points could also be used toward free SEPTA rides or free/discounted membership in car-sharing programs. Under this program, Philadelphians could use their PhillyBux for membership in car sharing programs.

5. Launch a marketing campaign highlighting the cost differences between commuting by car and bicycle

Safety

6. Give away free bike locks to those who participate in bike safety education programs
7. Create a database of registered bicycles

A database, administered by the Police Department, would be useful in tracking stolen bicycles and would create the perception that the city is interested in returning stolen bicycles to their rightful owners.

8. Create an accredited Philadelphia bicycle shop program

Accredited shops would register bikes in the city's database at the time of sale and provide bike owners with education and training. Shops that participate in the bike registration and education programs could become accredited and receive tax breaks or other incentives.

Education

9. Expand educational programs

Building on the existing, federally funded Bicycle Education Enhancement Program (BEEP), outreach in elementary and middle schools can be done to train a new generation of bicyclists.

Given that we are a consumer society and that identity with a particular group is created through consumption patterns, it will be very helpful to have celebrities, sports figures and other high-profile people identify cycling as a means of transportation that they enjoy and engage in.

10. Public recognition of cyclists

Make cycling prestigious, possibly with an annual award/certificate from the mayor, congratulating cyclists for making Philadelphia a better place to work and live.

Engage the mayor and members of City Council, getting them to bike to work on a periodic basis, to demonstrate leadership and executive commitment in this area.

11. Launch a public health campaign to promote the benefits of cycling

Cycling England has created a pamphlet on this topic, outlining the health benefits associated with cycling, namely the reduction of health risk from cardiovascular disease, heart attack, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer and overweight/obesity. A similar pamphlet can be created for Philadelphia, outlining the health and quality-of-life costs due to inactivity and the health and quality-of-life benefits due to cycling/increased activity.

VI: Funding

Funding is available from a variety of sources for these recommendations. These sources include, but are not limited to, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program, Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds, State and Community Highway Safety Grants, Job Access and Reverse Commute Grants, Pennsylvania Growing Greener II Act Grants, the Surface Transportation Program, the Safe Routes to School (SRS) Program, the Federal Transit Program, the Transportation and Community and System Preservation Program, and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

Project description	Source of funding	Amount of funding
Adopt-a-Rack	CMAQ	\$320,000
Tidal Schuylkill River greenway and trail	CMAQ	\$400,000
Bike racks on SEPTA buses	CMAQ	\$24,000
Bike racks and lockers at SEPTA stations	CMAQ	\$96,000
Cobbs Creek Bikeway	CMAQ	\$1,585,000
Philadelphia bicycle network	CMAQ	\$2,960,000
Bike outreach	CMAQ	\$215,000
BEEP	TE	\$397,894
Philadelphia Zoo/West Bank Greenway	TE	\$904,625
East Falls Reconnects to the River, Phase I	TE	\$677,760
Manayunk Recreation Path-Phase II/Fairmount Bikeway	TE	\$800,000
Philadelphia bicycle ambassadors	TE/SRS	\$360,000

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission serves as a facilitator for obtaining state and federal funding.

VII: Conclusion

Boosting bicycle commuting requires strong dedication, multi-pronged approach, sustained multi-departmental cooperation, and political will. The above recommendations, implemented incrementally as appropriate, will make Philadelphia a more bicycle-friendly city. However, in order to successfully increase bike commuting substantially for the long term, the city must demonstrate a real commitment and take the lead in changing attitudes, making improvements and providing incentives to the public. If the city is successful, Philadelphia will be a greener, healthier, more livable city.

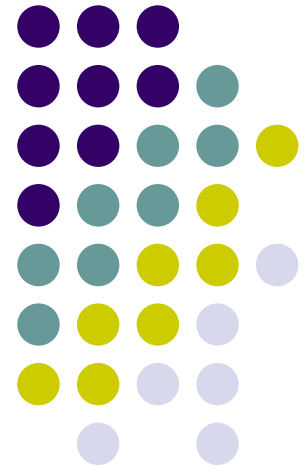
This presentation as well as the resources used to create it are located at:

<http://philly.twg.googlepages.com>

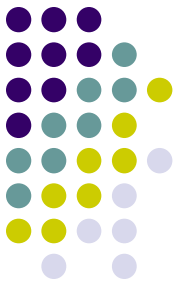
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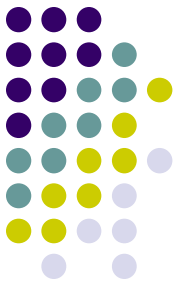
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Research Question



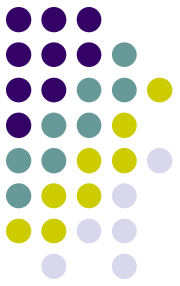
- How can City employees be motivated to bike to work?



Background

- Motives for increasing bicycle commuting
 - Economic, Environmental, Health
- Addressing Core Service Areas
- Ongoing Work within the City
 - Streets Department, Planning Commission & Parking Authority

Recommendations



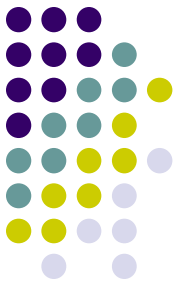
Short Term

- Strict traffic enforcement
- Installation of additional bicycle racks and lockers
- Establish a bicycle safety task force
- Expansion of bicycle lane network

Long Term

- Work with SEPTA to make mass transit bike-rider friendly
- Zoning code provision for indoor bicycle parking

Highlighted Recommendation

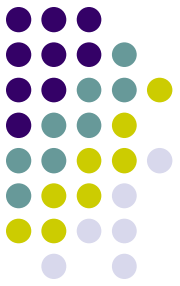


Center City BikeStation

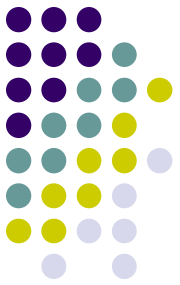
- Provides storage, repairs, showers, bike store and/or rental facilities
- Possible Locations – MSB, South Broad Concourse
- Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, Washington DC



Incentives to Increase Bicycle Ridership



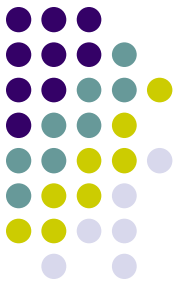
- Financial
 - Pre-tax purchase
 - Paid transit time
- Safety
 - Accredited bicycle shops
 - Bicycle registration/database
 - PhillyGear bicycle locks with safety education



Highlighted Incentive

- PhillyBux
 - Integration of cycling into Philadelphians' everyday lives
 - Smart-card system rewards program
 - Provides perks at Philadelphia venues and institutions – sporting events, PhillyCarShare, Zipcar, merchants, restaurants, bike shops, etc.

Conclusion



Thank you for this opportunity.

For more information, please visit:

<http://philly.twg.googlepages.com>

