

Feedback

Bicycle Friendly Community Application

The Woodlands Township, TX

Fall 2011





The League of American Bicyclists has designated **The Woodlands Township, TX** as a Bicycle Friendly Community at the **Bronze** level, because The Woodlands Township 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** Planning philosophy of community incorporates end of trip facilities. Two thirds of destinations have bike racks or storage units. Community has an extensive shared-use path network. Half of arterial streets have bike lanes or paved shoulders.
- **Education** 50% of elementary schools and 20% of middle schools have Safe Routes to School programs. Community has recently educated motorists and bicyclists on sharing the road safely through information in new resident packages, newspaper articles and share the road signs. Traffic Skills 101 classes and Cycling Skills classes are offered annually in the community. Community requires driver training for city staff.
- **Encouragement** There are some community events and incentive programs. Community has a mountain bike park, BMX track and cyclocross course. Community has a bike share program.
- **Enforcement** The Woodlands Township has an identified law-enforcement point person to interact with cyclists. Officers have received specific training on the relationship between bicycling and law enforcement. It is illegal to park or drive in a bike lane (intersections excepted). There is a ban on cell phone use while driving. There is a ban on texting while driving. The community uses photo enforcement for red lights and/or speed.
- **Evaluation & Planning** The Woodlands has developed infrastructure that is supportive of outdoor physical activities and connectivity of communities via its park and pathway system.

Particular **highlights** were the St. Lukes Hospital Safety Day; regional NuRide program; The Woodlands Township Bike Friendly Action Plan; the WCC works with Elves and More to provide bicycles to low-income children at Christmas.

Reviewers were very pleased to see the current efforts, potential and commitment to make The Woodlands Township 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 The Woodlands Township 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 The Woodlands Township should take to improve cycling in the community are:

- Expanding the bicycle and pedestrian manager’s time focused on bike projects would help in scaling up your BFC efforts. 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
- Continue to expand the bike network and increase network connectivity through the use of bike lanes, sharrows or signed routes. 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.
- Ensure that bicycle-safety education is a routine part of public education. Work with your Bicycle Advisory Committee and local bicycle advocates to expand [Safe Routes to School programs](#) that emphasizes bicycling at elementary schools and middle schools, and develop and implement a Safe Routes to School program at high schools. Strongly encourage all schools to participate.
- 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 public service announcements, more share the road street signs or a dedicated bike page on community website. Consider taking advantage of your local bicycle advocates for content and strategy development, and manpower. See a motorist education video at <http://www.bikelib.org/safety-education/motorists/driver-education/>. Also, see the excellent Look Campaign from New York City: http://www.nyc.gov/html/look/html/about/about_us_text.shtml.



- Expand encouragement efforts during National Bike Month in partnership with local bicycle advocacy groups. Host, sponsor and/or encourage more bicycle-themed community events such as community rides, a trail maintenance day and a bicycle festival. Ensure to widely advertise all bicycle-themed community events. You and the local bicycle community can increase your efforts on Bike to Work Day, for example by offering breakfast for bike commuters or by having a council member lead a commuter convoy:
<http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bikemonth/>
- Promote, host, sponsor and/or encourage a greater 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, 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:

- Ask the County to adopt a [Complete Streets](#) or Bicycle Accommodation policy and offer implementation guidance. By adopting a Complete Streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists – making your community a better place to live.
- 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 asking for 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
- Promote [ongoing training](#) opportunities on accommodating bicyclists for County and community engineering, planning staff, and law enforcement. 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.

- Set up training for city staff and area consultants on bicycle facility design and planning. 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 (more) 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>
- Consider asking the County to measure 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/\(roads\)](http://www.bikelib.org/bike-planning/bicycle-level-of-service/(roads)) and <http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/library/details.cfm?id=4425> (intersections).
- Consider asking for road diets in appropriate locations to make streets more efficient and safe. Use the newly created space for bicycle and pedestrian facilities: <http://www.walkable.org/assets/downloads/roaddiets.pdf>
- Ask the County to accommodate bicycles at intersections and multi-use path crossings to improve efficiency and safety of all road and path users. At intersections, time traffic lights for bicycle speeds or incorporate microwave cameras, loop detectors or bicycle signal heads. Consider adding bike boxes to make bicyclists more visible to motorists. Consider incorporate grade separated multi-use path crossings or other high-visibility treatments on medium and high traffic roads. Ensure that both path and road users are clearly informed about who has the right-of-way at every crossing.

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.
- Ask the County to 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:

- Improve the reach of the community's bicycle safety campaigns. Use valuable information from the League's Ride Better Tips in your outreach education and encouragement efforts. See the Ride Better Tips pages at <http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/better/index.php> , PSA's <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bikemonth/psas.php> and the downloadable Bicycle Safety Tips for Adults video at <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/shortversion.wmv> . (Again,) consider taking advantage of your local bicycle advocates for content and strategy development and manpower.
- Suggest starting a bicyclist and motorist ticket diversion program. 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. Suggest starting a motorist education programs for professional drivers such as bus and taxi drivers in the County. 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.
- Team with a local advocacy group, bicycle shop, or League Cycling Instructor to offer regular public maintenance classes to residents. A short tutorial on how to change a flat tire can empower a person to ride their bike more often. You can find local instructors and bike shops here: https://members.bikeleague.org/members_online/members/findit.asp
- Offer bicycling skills classes, a Traffic Skills 101 classes and commuter classes on a more *frequent* basis or encourage a local bicycle advocacy group, club or shop to do so. You could invite a League Cycling Instructor (LCI) to conduct the classes. Ideally the instruction would incorporate a classroom portion as well as on-road training. For examples of educational materials visit: <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/>. To find a local LCI go to: https://members.bikeleague.org/members_online/members/findit.asp

Encouragement

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Set up and promote bicycle-themed community celebrations and/or rides each time the community or the County completes a new bicycle related project in The Woodlands



Township. This is a great way to show off the community's and the County's good efforts and introduces new users to the improvement.

- Encourage 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/>.
- Encourage local universities 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
- Design and publish several 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 'Ciclovía' 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>

- Consider creating a Bicycle Ambassador program like Chicago's:
<http://www.activetrans.org/volunteer/become-active-trans-volunteer-ambassador>
- Implement a mechanism that ensures that facilities, programs and encouragement efforts are implemented in traditionally underserved communities.
- 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.

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. Ask police officers to use targeted information and enforcement to encourage motorists *and* cyclists to share the road. This could be in the form of a brochure or tip card explaining each user's rights and responsibilities. Have information material available in Spanish, if applicable. Also 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.
- 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 Enforcement for 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>



- Ask the County to adopt fair, equitable and uniform traffic laws that are “vehicle-neutral” to the greatest extent possible. Local laws that discriminate against cyclists, or restrict their right to travel, or reduce their relative safety, should be repealed.
- Enforcement practices could also include positive enforcement ticketing. Police officers could team up with local stores to reward safe cycling practices by handing out gift certificates to cyclists who are “caught” following the law. See what Tewksbury, MA is doing: <http://www.wickedlocal.com/tewksbury/news/lifestyle/x1837747400/Tewksbury-police-reward-young-cyclists-for-wearing-their-helmets#axzz1WdjHHfMo>

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. We strongly encourage you to participate in the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project: <http://bikepeddocumentation.org/>.
- Expand efforts to evaluate crash statistics and produce a specific plan to reduce the number of crashes in the community. Available tools include *Intersection Magic*: <http://www.pdmagic.com/im/> and [PBCAT](#). See the report [Bicyclist Fatalities and Serious Injuries in New York City 1996-2005](#)
- Consider implementing a trip reduction program. 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

Long Term Goals

- Ask the County to develop a [comprehensive bike plan](#) in close collaboration with your 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.
- Ask the County to integrate the implementation of the bike plan into the master plan, all land use plans, zoning ordinances and larger development projects.
- Encourage a mix of uses, a well connected street network and compact development patterns throughout the community to shorten the distances people need to bike.
- Work with the [mountain biking community](#) to develop a plan for off-road access and increase opportunities for [single-track](#) riding within the city.

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