

# Evanston's Bicycle System Improvement Plan

## Project Description

The City of Evanston, through a multi-departmental effort, is developing a plan to improve conditions for bicycling within the City. Evanston is already a bicycling city. With several colleges and universities and forty three percent of Evanston based workers also living in Evanston, the nature and length of trips are very conducive to cycling.

The City hired the Evanston-based bicycle and pedestrian planning firm, Suzan A. Pinsof and Associates, to lead a team of consultants that includes T.Y. Lin International and the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation to prepare a Bicycle System Improvement Plan. The planning process assessed local conditions and needs through an examination of use and crash data, as well as extensive public outreach. A proposed implementation program and appropriate policy initiatives were then developed. The program identifies short and longer-term improvements and specifies facility type, costs and funding options.

**For further information regarding the Evanston Bicycle Plan please contact Stefanie Levine at (847) 448-8043.**

## Public Outreach

The city recognizes that public involvement in a bicycle plan is essential for gaining insights into the needs and preferences that the plan should address. During plan development there have been several opportunities for public involvement.

**Thursday, July 11, 2002**

### **Bicycle Network Plan: Public Review**

An evening meeting was held to review the final draft Bicycle Network Plan. A proposed bicycle network plan, based on the consultant's field studies, plus comments received during the September 9, 2001 bike ride, the November 7, 2001 evening workshop and the April 4, 2002 public review was presented. Input was received on the proposed street and trail improvements.

**Thursday, April 4, 2002**

### **Bicycle Network Plan: Public Review**

An evening meeting was held to review the draft Bicycle Network Plan. A proposed bicycle network plan, based on the consultant's field studies, plus comments received during the September 9, 2001 bike ride and the November 7, 2001 evening workshop, was presented. Input was received on the proposed street and trail improvements.

**November, 2001**

### **Bicycle Parking Survey**

Volunteers again contributed valuable information for the plan. Nine Evanston cyclists surveyed the entire community to identify bicycle parking needs.

**Wednesday, November 7, 2001**

**Community-wide Bicycle Planning Workshop**

56 participants attended this workshop including representatives from the Evanston Bicycle Club, City staff, various community organizations and other interested citizens. The insights gained through these public participation efforts will contribute to the draft facility network plan, as well as the policy elements of the draft plan.



**September and October, 2001**

**Bicycle Counts**

Volunteers from Evanston's cycling community and the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation conducted counts to document some of the bicycling activity in Evanston. Data collected included distribution of bicycle use, helmet use, and the extent of sidewalk and wrong-way riding.

**Saturday, September 29, 2001**

**Institutional Bicycle Ride and Discussion**

A bicycle ride and box lunch discussion offered first hand experience of riding in Evanston to City staff and other community decision-makers. The follow-up discussion contributed ideas from local institutions and businesses about the role of bicycling in the City and the ways in which the City can work with others to create the best possible plan.

## **Executive Summary**

Evanston is a bicycling city. Bike counts undertaken by local volunteers found that more than 550 cyclists pass the corner of Chicago Avenue and Sheridan Road in a typical 6 hour period of time. Lesser but still significant counts were taken at other locations in the City. Census travel to work data indicates that the number of people bicycling to work in Evanston is almost 6 times the regional average.

With all of this bicycling, why is a bicycle plan needed? The high level of bicycling is an indicator of not only what is happening but also of what might be possible. The improvements recommended in the **Evanston Bicycle System Improvement Plan** will improve the safety and convenience of bicycling. When cities provide bikeways (bicycle lanes, bicycle routes and paths) bicycling becomes a more attractive option for a larger number of people.

Evanston's density, its beautiful streets, its convenient shopping, and the large number of students and people who both live and work in Evanston contributes to the popularity of

bicycling. More people bicycling improves the City in many ways. Bicycle access encourages shopping locally; it is a great means of transportation for students; it requires little space for parking; and, bicycling contributes to the quieter, safer streets that residents want. Longer term benefits include opportunities for healthier lifestyles and more interpersonal contact that contributes to a friendlier community.

The **Evanston Bicycle System Improvement Plan** was developed in two phases. **Task 1: Needs Assessment**, completed in January, 2002 assessed both the existing conditions for bicycling and the needs of the bicycling public. Extensive public involvement was instrumental in defining these needs. Primary among improvements desired were on-street facilities, including bike lanes where possible and appropriate; smooth pavement on all roads but especially on those used extensively by bicyclists; bicycle parking facilities at desired locations; better understanding between motorists and bicyclists; and, coordination with Northwestern University, other colleges and schools and local businesses to encourage bicycle transportation.

**Task 2: Facility Network and Recommended Policies** culminated in a proposed program of improvements to streets, trails and bicycle parking facilities that reflects the needs of bicyclists in Evanston. This program includes 12 miles of bicycle lanes, 31 miles of bicycle routes and improvements to 3 miles of trails. Implementation is recommended to take place over a proposed period of 6 years and will be financed through a combination of local funds and State grants that are available for such improvements. Some improvements are projected to be included in larger upcoming roadway and bridge projects. Volunteers assisted with an assessment of bicycle parking needs that informed recommendations to improve bicycle parking at transit stations, schools and in shopping districts. Additionally, the Task 2 report recommends policy initiatives that address bicycle safety and encouragement and provide strategies to facilitate plan implementation.

The proposed facility network is summarized in Chapter 3 of the **Task 2: Facility Network and Recommended Policies** report. An overview of the network development process is presented followed by a brief description of the six north/south routes and the nine east/west routes that comprise the recommended network. A map of the proposed system is included.

The policy initiatives proposed in Chapter 4 include recommendations to maintain the current ban on sidewalk bicycling in the downtown, recognizing that the proposed facility improvements for downtown will offer an alternative for safety conscious bicyclists. Additional policy recommendations would have the city pursue improved bicycle parking in public locations and to adopt an ordinance to require bicycle parking with new development. The plan also recommends that a Bicycle Advisory Council be established to facilitate plan implementation and that the City work with others to promote education, enforcement and encouragement efforts that will increase the appeal and safety of bicycling in Evanston.

Finally, the report presents the program of improvements that will effectively create the bicycle network. Chapter 5 presents a six year plan for implementation in a program spreadsheet that includes the project limits, facility types, materials needed and cost estimates for each improvement.

The **Evanston Bicycle System Improvement Plan** is the result of a year long coordinated effort of various City departments and of many contributions from the public as participants in planning events, as volunteers and as the source of thoughtful review and comment.

## Needs Assessment Report

The first task for Evanston's Bicycle System Improvement Plan is to assess the needs of Evanston bicyclists through an examination of existing conditions and to set out an approach to the design of a bicycle facility network. The following links connect to a report that uses bike counts, bicycle accident data and public input to assess current conditions for bicycling in Evanston and to indicate future needs. Priorities for area cyclists and for various institutions that would be served by improved bicycling conditions include:

- Improved on-street accommodations on a network of priority streets identified by participants in the Community Bicycle Workshop
- Improvements to rough pavement conditions
- Bicycle parking improvements
- Better understanding between motorists and bicyclists
- Coordinated bike planning between the City and Northwestern University, other colleges, schools, area businesses and developers

## Facility Network and Recommended Policies Report

The second major task of the **Evanston Bicycle System Improvement Plan** is to develop proposals for street and trail improvements that will better serve the needs of Evanston's cyclists. *Task 2: Facility Network and Recommended Policies* presents the proposed network of facility improvements as well as design guidance and recommended policies.

Chapter 1 is the report's introduction. Chapter 2 summarizes facility design guidance that is appropriate for use in Evanston including bicycle parking guidance that would be appropriate for private as well as public bicycle parking installations.

Chapter 3 describes the recommended network of bicycle facilities and the process through which it was developed. The Bicycle Facility Network is made up of a series of recommended improvements for on-street and off-street facilities that will provide north/south and east/west routes through Evanston. This network is complemented by recommendations for priority bicycle parking improvements. A link is provided for viewing a map of the proposed network.

Certain policy initiatives can reinforce efforts to implement the Bicycle Facility Network, to improve the safety of bicycling and to encourage bicycling to school, to work and to shop. Bicycle parking policies and a policy to establish a bicycle advisory council could help Evanston meet these goals. Chapter 4 includes a series of recommended policy initiatives suggested by the planning process.

Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the projects that make up the Bicycle Facility Network by recommended programming year. Funding strategies are also summarized. Two spreadsheets (Exhibit 5-1 and Appendix D) will provide project limits, facility types and cost estimates as well as the recommended programming year. These spreadsheets are under development and will be posted for public review after the City Council has had an opportunity to review the plan.