


BICYCLES IN CITIES



Vol. I

PORTRAIT OF A BICYCLE COMMITTEE

 A key element in the success of Eugene, Oregon's thriving system of bicycle lanes, paths and bridges is its citizen/staff bicycle committee. At least once a month for more than a decade at the daunting hour of 7:30 a.m. the Eugene Bicycle Committee, composed of five citizens and five staff, has met to solve bicycle problems.

HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE. In 1970 the Eugene City Council, nudged along by a mayor who was a cyclist himself, suggested a bicycle committee. The Committee's first members were five staff persons from relevant departments: public works, traffic engineering, planning, parks and police. Looking back from the perspective of 1980, the former traffic engineer remembered that his division "was not all that excited about a bicycle committee." The strong emphasis on automobile and pedestrian safety overextended available staff services. In addition, the traffic engineer and other staff members felt that a good bicycle program was probably not attainable. The City Manager, another cyclist, added five lay members in January 1971. These members, in contrast, believed a good bicycle program was possible.

In the early years of the Committee, the citizens tended to work harder and show more interest than did staff. Now the reverse is true. It is mostly staff that keeps the well-established program rolling. However, the tradition of a citizen chairman, established during the early years, remains.

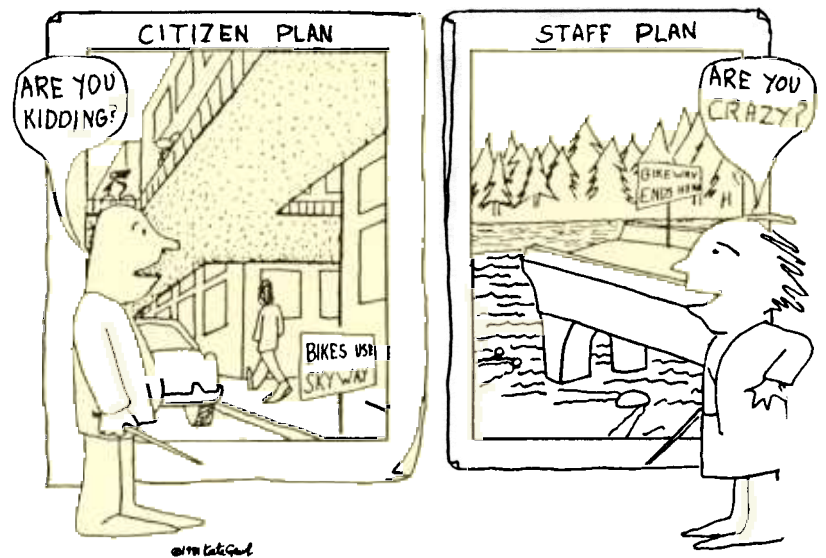
In 1972 citizen members put together a temporary bikeway plan by simply observing where bicyclists were riding or would be likely to ride if they could. Staff, principally the traffic engineer, recognized the need for a more comprehensive plan. With \$40,000 in Federal Highway safety money, he hired a professional consultant to prepare one. Engineers from DeLeuw, Cather & Company of San Francisco worked for one year with citizen and staff members of the Committee to develop the Eugene Bikeways Master Plan. Updated every year, the Master Plan guides development of the City's cycling program.



COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE. One of the most significant factors as well as one of the most easily overlooked is the staff/citizen composition of the city bicycle committee. This structure makes possible a continuing, innovative dialogue between staff professionals and lay people.

The five citizen members are appointed by the Mayor. Two of the original five still serve--a homemaker and a professor at the University of Oregon. All use their bicycles regularly for transportation. Staff are appointed by the City Manager and represent the various parts of city government. The staff contingent presently includes the traffic engineer, the city engineer, and representatives from the parks, planning, and police departments. Bicycle experience is not a requirement but converts do emerge from Committee exposure. Though they were initially non-cyclists, the present and former city traffic engineers have grown from grudging acceptance to genuine interest.

ROLES OF CITIZEN AND STAFF COMMITTEE MEMBERS. Staff and citizen members complement each other. Over the years, each segment has demonstrated particular strengths. Citizen members often provide enthusiasm, a fresh perspective, innovative ideas and a voice for the bicycle constituency. The staff provides technical expertise, manpower for mundane tasks, and a tempering influence. In case of conflict, the mutual respect among members and their concentration on issues rather than personalities have helped avoid a lay-professional dichotomy.



Particularly in the early years of the Committee, it was the responsibility of the citizen members to fight for bicycle funds in the City's budget. The junior staff members who served on the Committee were clearly unable to ask for budget items over the heads of their superiors. However, citizen members could unabashedly go straight to the City Council to seek funding for bicycle projects. In 1972 citizens won from the Council, without staff approval, the first budget entry for bikeways: \$30,000.

With adoption of the Master Plan in 1974 by the Eugene City Council, the Eugene Bicycle Committee came of age. Not only was a \$75,000 bicycle item included in the yearly capital budget, but, equally important, the department directors from public works, planning and parks became staff members of the Committee for several years. Budget discussions in recent years have centered on content, not amount. Special appeals to the City Council are usually unnecessary.

Soon after the Council unanimously approved the Bikeways Master Plan in 1974, the first attempt to remove parking and provide bike lanes began. Each segment of the Committee had its own job to do. The traffic engineer guided the parking removal proposal through the notification and appeal process. The citizen members won the crucial Council vote. Between them, the difficult job was accomplished.

As early as 1971, the Committee had identified the need for a bicycle-pedestrian bridge across the Willamette River to Valley River Center, a new regional shopping center. In



Eugene's citizen/staff Bicycle Committee, meets from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. on the first Tuesday of each month. During the fall when the Bikeway Master Plan is updated and budget items are developed, the Committee meets twice per month.




City Engineer Bert Teitzel explains a bikeway design proposal to the Traffic Engineer, the Bicycle Coordinator, representatives of parks and planning departments, and citizen members.

1975, staff members prepared an application for National Bikeway Demonstration Funds for a \$300,000 bridge. When the project lost at the regional level, undaunted citizen members rewrote the proposal, added pictures, staged a letter-writing and political string-pulling effort, and pulled the plum from the federal pie. When it came time to dedicate the Greenway Bridge and thank US Senator Robert Packwood, city staff handled the publicity, the appropriate plaque, and the VIP luncheon. Citizen members pitched in with flowers on the bridge, a parade, and even punch and cookies for those who came to the celebration.

The City Bicycle Coordinator, a position created and funded in 1975, now provides a central reception point for bicycle matters and is responsible for day-to-day duties involving the construction and maintenance of the bikeway network. Though not a voting Committee member, the Bicycle Coordinator prepares the Bicycle Committee's agendas and oversees distribution of minutes and materials for the monthly or semi-monthly meetings.

OTHER ADVANTAGES OF A CITIZEN/STAFF COMMITTEE. As an advisory committee to the City Council, the Bicycle Committee's recommendation carries more weight when it achieves a citizen-staff consensus. Although it can make recommendations by a simple majority vote, a vote with even one or two dissenters generally indicates it is wise to back up and talk some more. On the other hand, disputes sure to arise between public works and planning have been settled when the full weight and wisdom of the Committee sided with one department director or the other. If consensus is not reached on a bike route, for example, an on-site, on-bicycle review by a subcommittee of staff and citizen members usually provides a plan the full committee will accept.

When a city bicycle program relies too heavily on a single person such as the traffic engineer or bicycle coordinator, that individual's departure can set the program back a year or two--or even damage a fledgling program irreparably. In Eugene, several personnel losses have been accommodated with little loss of momentum. The presence of a regular committee with a body of wisdom shared by the continuing members provides a buffer against these losses. Both citizen and staff members are able to pick up the slack. The program need not die and have to be restarted, and replacements are more quickly trained. Under the guidance of the Committee, three bicycle coordinators gained their stripes and two traffic engineers learned to think bicycles.

Year-to-year continuity and the regular monthly dialogue fostered by the citizen/staff bicycle committee emerge as major factors in the success of Eugene's bicycle program. 

Bylaws written in 1971 and revised in 1975 provide the framework and focus for the Committee.

BYLAWS — EUGENE BICYCLE COMMITTEE

ARTICLE I — NAME.

This committee, established by the Mayor of the City of Eugene, shall be called the Eugene Bicycle Committee.

ARTICLE II — PURPOSE.

The purpose of the committee is to advise the City government of Eugene in the encouragement and facilitation of the use of bicycles as a regular means of transportation and recreation. The responsibilities of the committee shall include but not be limited to:

Section 1. Bikeway Policy

- a. *Review:* Reviewing the Eugene Bikeways Master Plan at least annually and proposing plan amendments based on this review.
- b. *Budget and Priorities:* Establishing each year a list of recommended bikeway priorities to be drawn up after the annual review and to serve as a proposed bikeway budget for the coming year.
- c. *Coordination:* Maintaining contact with metro and state bicycle programs and plans to insure compatibility.

Section 2. Bikeway Implementation

- a. *Design Review:* Reviewing and approving preliminary and final plans for financing and creating specific bikeways.
- b. *Conflict Resolution:* Seeking consensus among staff, committee, affected citizens, and neighborhood or other interested groups on bikeway design and implementation.

Section 3. Education and Enforcement

Promoting and implementing educational and law enforcement programs called for by the Master Plan.

Section 4. Citizen Contact

- a. *Information:* Keeping the public informed about existing and proposed bikeways and bicycle programs.
- b. *Input:* Encouraging citizen participation in identifying problem areas, reviewing existing facilities, and planning and implementing new ones.

ARTICLE III — MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Composition of the Committee

The voting membership of the committee shall consist of five members of the professional staff of the City Government of Eugene and five lay members who are citizens of Eugene.

Section 2. Appointment

Citizen members shall be appointed by the Mayor and staff members shall be appointed by the City Manager. Recommendations for membership may be made by any interested citizen, the committee, City Council or the City Manager.

Section 3. Tenure

All citizen members shall serve until they resign or are removed by the Mayor. If any citizen member of the committee shall be absent from three consecutive regular meetings, the Mayor may, upon recommendation from the Chair, declare this position vacant.

Section 4. Voting Privileges

Each of the ten voting members of the committee shall be entitled to one vote on all issues presented at meetings at which the member is present.

Section 5. Officers

The officers shall be a Chair, who shall be a citizen member, and a Vice-Chair, who shall be a staff member.

Section 6. Sub-Committees

The officers shall appoint sub-committees as needed. Either citizens or staff may be members of a sub-committee.

ARTICLE IV — MEETINGS

Section 1. Regular Meetings

Regular meetings shall be held monthly at the City Hall, unless otherwise agreed upon. Time and duration of the meetings shall be determined by the committee.

Section 2. Conduct of Meetings

- a. A majority of members (six) shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any regular meeting.
- b. The Act of a majority of the members present at a meeting at which there is a quorum shall be the act of the committee.

ARTICLE V — AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

The Bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the committee by a majority of the voting membership (six affirmative votes) of the committee, provided that written notice of the proposed amendment is mailed to each member of the committee not less than one (1) week prior to such meeting.

BICYCLES IN CITIES
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