

Vol. II

EUGENE BIKEWAYS MASTER PLAN

 What if they built a bikeway and nobody rode it?

This almost happened with Eugene's first route, a signed approach to the University of Oregon. After this maiden route was opened, use revealed that it was not the preferred approach to the University campus. The moderately stiff climb was enough to shunt bicyclists to a parallel unsigned street. Eugene learned a valuable lesson: bikeways that work best go where the bicyclists go.

The city bicycle program had begun in 1970 at the urging of a member of the city council and the mayor. The city manager responded by establishing a staff committee which he soon expanded to a staff-citizen committee. Their charge was to encourage bicycle use.

Potential ridership was thought to be high. There were an estimated 30,000 bicycles in the city. A newspaper questionnaire in the fall of 1970 drew 1,100 responses. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents requested bicycle lanes, paths and routes. Public hearings that first year produced similar requests for routes.

By this time, Davis, California had an extensive bike route system which Eugene studied. But Eugene is not a small university town with wide streets in a flat valley. It is Oregon's second largest city with (in 1980) 105,000 residents and a metropolitan area population of 190,000. The lumber industry is the community's economic base and log trucks rumble through the city on its older, narrow streets. Much of the residential area is on hilly terrain, the Willamette River bisects the city, and Oregon's rainy winters are legend.

There were positive factors as well. Eugene's city government was open and efficient, citizen participation was expected, and city policy endorsed compact land use. A major university provided potential riders, the climate was generally mild, and the banks of the Willamette River were largely undeveloped.

BEFORE THE OFFICIAL PLAN. Armed with a reasonable expectation of success and with that first valuable lesson, the Bicycle Committee, principally the citizen members, went to work. They cobbled together a plan by asking and answering three basic questions. Where do bicyclists ride now? Where would they be likely to ride if existing barriers were removed? Can these barriers be removed or overcome?

To answer the first question, the citizen members drew on their experience as commuter cyclists and on data gathered through questionnaires and public hearings. Also, at the traffic engineer's request, they made bicycle counts on twelve key streets. Barriers to bicycle travel were readily identified and included the Willamette River, railroad tracks, congested arterials and discontinuous streets; overcoming many of them appeared impossible. In spite of the obstacles, the committee set out to implement their plan.

Major implementation efforts in 1971 centered on a one-block gap in the street system near downtown Eugene. Both citizen comments and bicycle counts revealed the importance of this connector. Counts in 1971 revealed that the unofficial dirt and mud path was the route of choice for 1,000 cyclists a day, yet a proposed apartment building threatened to block the route. Negotiations for easements dragged on and the Bicycle Committee temporarily shifted its emphasis to other routes. Seven years later, the city obtained money and easements for this first segment and community development funds for path construction. By 1980, counts on this connector were as high as 3,600 cyclists a day.

A second gap in the street system identified in the Committee's "working plan" had a better chance of immediate success. This time only funding, rather than easements and money, was a problem. A discontinuous system of residential streets discouraged residents of the married student housing complex from cycling to the university campus two and a half miles east, but gaps in the street system were in public ownership. Land adjacent to the county fairgrounds and along a drainage canal could accommodate a bike route. Bicycle Committee citizen members surveyed the potential users; then, armed with favorable data and with photographs, they went over the heads of reluctant staff members straight to the City Council in a special appeal, saying: "We have to start somewhere. Let's start here." The Council agreed and appropriated \$18,000 of city funds for this first bikeway project, a 10-foot wide, 3/4 miles long, asphalt path linking three discontinuous street sections.

Appreciative path users appeared immediately. At a booth at the county fair in 1972, the Bicycle Committee advertised the new route, solicited suggestions for improvement, and encouraged thank-you letters to the City Council and city staff.

PREPARING THE PLAN. By 1973 the city and county had built or committed themselves to sixteen miles of bikeways. The city traffic engineer, converted from skepticism to genuine interest, sensed that the temporary plan lacked the credibility and rigor that professionals can provide. He found funds from a federal highway safety program -- \$40,000 with an 80-20 federal-local match -- to hire a team of consultants to take a fresh look at Eugene's developing bikeway system. Three applicants were interviewed and the contract was awarded to DeLeuw, Cather & Company, the San Francisco engineering firm preparing the 1974 Federal Highway Administration study, Bikeways: State of the Art. (In 1979, those responsible for the Eugene plan formed DKS Associates, Oakland.)

In the development of the Eugene Bikeways Master Plan, the consultants kept a bicycle in Eugene and personally bicycled many miles of existing and contemplated routes. They served as virtual adjunct members of the Eugene Bicycle Committee, attending the twice monthly meetings and receiving comments from local cyclists on a regular basis.

In May, toward the end of their field investigations, the consultants held a public hearing in conjunction with the state and local bicycle committees. The 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. hearing



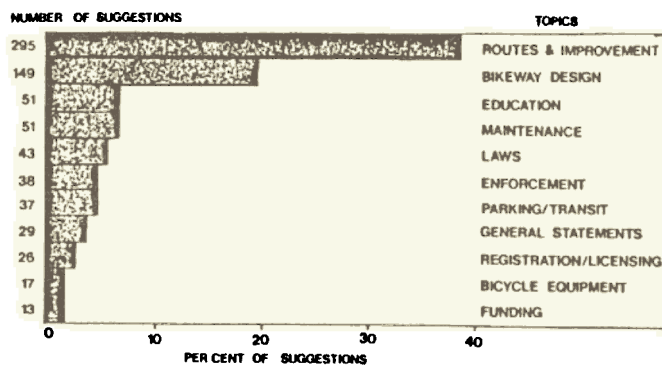
BICYCLE HEARINGS ARE SPONSORED BY:

- Eugene Bicycle Committee - (City Hall, 777 Pearl St.)
- Metro Bicycle Committee - (ICOG, 135 E. 6th Ave.)
- Springfield Bicycle Committee - (City Hall, 346 Main St.)
- Oregon Bicycle Advisory Committee - (Hwy. Bldg., Salem)

Your comments on existing bicycle facilities and your ideas about bicycle safety and areas in need of bicycle facilities are needed to help plan the comprehensive bicycle system for the Metropolitan area. If you have written comments, sketches or diagrams, bring them to the Bicycle Hearings; or if you cannot attend send them to one of the above bicycle committees.

50,000 meeting notices, printed on both sides of 3½" x 7" yellow cards, were mailed with monthly utility billings.

encouraged all sectors of the community to have their say. At the well-publicized event testimony was received from 121 persons, ranging from school children to senior citizens. Another 100 persons sent in written comments or placed entries in the suggestion box provided at the hearing. For most of the day, the audience consisted of 30 to 50 people and the discussion never lacked contributors. (A similar 12-hour hearing in 1979 helped evaluate the five year old program.)



Citizens emphasized bikeways at the May '73 public hearing.

The resultant Eugene Bikeways Master Plan appeared in late 1974. While the 11" by 17" document includes sections on cyclists' perceptions, accidents, design standards, education and enforcement, the principal section details the bikeway system. The plan proposes 120 routes covering some 150 miles.

PLAN ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION. The City Council promptly adopted the plan in early 1975. The unanimous vote and the general acclaim that followed attested to the quality of the plan and to the interest generated by four years of successful bikeway beginnings. Also, during those four years, the citizen members of the Bicycle Committee had kept in touch with Council members by sending them progress reports, calling on them in person, offering them bicycle rides, and working for passage of the city budget.

The unanimous vote also showed the relative ease of plan adoption; harder votes concern implementation. For example, the first request to remove parking and provide bike lanes resulted in a tied Council vote; fortunately, the city attorney ruled in favor of bike lanes.

The city administration gave heavyweight backing to the newly adopted plan by appointing to the Bicycle Committee the directors of the city's planning, public works, parks, and traffic engineering departments. These directors continued on the Bicycle Committee for three years until the program was well established.

Plan adoption and heavyweight backing also meant an annual line item in the city's capital improvements budget of \$75,000 for bikeways. By 1981, 70 miles had been constructed, including 21 miles of independent paths, 34 miles of on-street lanes and 15 miles of signed routes.



THE EUGENE BIKEWAYS MASTER PLAN, not a dusty document on a back shelf, gets regular use and yearly update. By the end of 1981, the bikeway network included 21 miles of independent paths, 34 miles of striped lanes, and 15 miles of signed routes.

In 1975, the Metropolitan Bicycle Committee, with a citizen-staff composition similar to the Eugene committee, developed an area plan. Authored principally by two transportation planners, one from Lane Council of Governments (L-COG) and one from Lane County, the Metropolitan Bikeway Master Plan expands upon the Eugene Plan. Adopted by Eugene, Lane County, Springfield (the adjacent city of 35,000) and L-COG (the designated areawide planning agency), this plan helps prevent bikeways which terminate at jurisdictional boundaries. In 1978, this plan was incorporated into the area's long-range

transportation plan, signaling recognition that bicycles were an integral component of the transportation system. Bicycle policies and projects are helping the area reach its goal of accommodating 15% of the year-2000-trips by walking, bicycling and carpooling.

UPDATING THE PLAN. The vehicle for modification and update, recommended by the Master Plan itself, is the annual review.

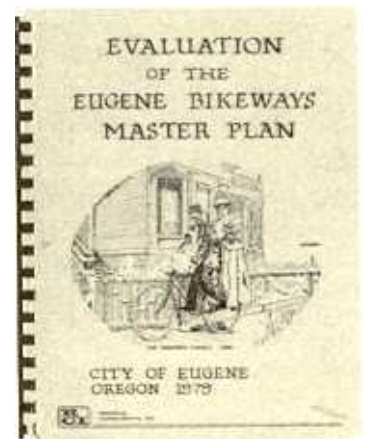
The annual review commences in October when the bicycle coordinator solicits ideas from the city's eight official neighborhood groups and from the Bicycle Committee. Staff compiles a list of suggested changes; committee members inspect route proposals by bicycle. There is no substitute for this on-bicycle review. The bicycle coordinator shepherds the proposed amendments through the city's formal adoption process past the Planning Commission and the City Council. Updating the Plan is time consuming but fairly routine, with the fireworks saved for implementation of individual projects.

A new policy added to the Plan in 1981 states "Bicycle facilities shall be provided where applicable on all new or reconstructed arterials." This had been an important, informal policy for several years and its formal acceptance won Council support handily.

Most Plan revisions to date have added new routes to the original list of 120. Twelve were independent paths added when opportunities arose to use utility easements and drainage channels. Two more bicycle bridges over the Willamette River ride piggyback on new utility pipes. Other additions to the Plan include two highway overpasses, nine signed routes and a "desire line" connecting a developing residential area by an undetermined route and facility

Ten other amendments deal with route substitutions or deletions. Three routes specifying on-street lanes replace two independent paths and a sidewalk bikeway included in the original plan. In three other instances, the reverse is true. On-street lanes were dropped in favor of independent paths. Other amendments merely move lanes or routes to different streets than originally proposed. These deletions and substitutions show that route details must be altered in the light of experience, and that bikeway planning and design requires fine tuning.

EVALUATING THE PLAN. After five years of living with the Master Plan, the time was ripe for an objective analysis. Regional Consultants, Inc. of Corvallis, Oregon, prepared the evaluation with \$20,000 from the Oregon Traffic Safety Commission. The evaluators found that the fifty miles of bikeways already built were serving the community well. Sixty percent of the city's bicycle commuters used the completed routes for over one-half the length of their trips. Bicycle counts from 1978 indicated an average 76% increase over similar counts taken in 1971. Accident data revealed that sidewalk bikeways had higher accident rates than other types, and that on-street lanes tended to reduce accidents. Volume XII of this series reports more completely on usage and accidents.



BICYCLES IN CITIES
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