

taking steps:

AN ASSESSMENT OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION SUPPORT FOR BICYCLING AND WALKING



THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR BICYCLING & WALKING



*Active
Living* RESOURCE
CENTER



about us

Bob Chauncey, PhD and
Bill Wilkinson, AICP.
“An Assessment of MPO
Support for Bicycling
and Walking,” National
Center for Bicycling &
Walking, Washington, DC:
December, 2003.

Support for this study was
provided by a grant from
The Robert Wood
Johnson Foundation®
Princeton, New Jersey.

Additional copies of this
report may be downloaded
from: www.bikewalk.org

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR BICYCLING & WALKING (NCBW) is a national, nonprofit organization established in 1977. Our mission is to make communities bicycle-friendly and walkable. In 2001, the NCBW was awarded a multi-year grant by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to provide technical assistance to communities, advocates, and professionals working to create more activity-friendly communities.

Other NCBW services include: consulting on long-range planning, policy development, public involvement, route selection, planning and design guidelines for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, training programs for public health and transportation professionals, economic development and tourism planning and analysis, and organizing and managing workshops and conferences, including the biennial ProWalk/ProBike conference.

Finally, the NCBW works with local, state, and national bicycle, pedestrian, and transportation professionals and advocates to improve government policies, programs, and practices to better support bicycle-friendly and walkable communities.

National Center for Bicycling & Walking
1506 21st Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
202.463.6622 (p)
202.463.6625 (f)
info@bikewalk.org
www.bikewalk.org





TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Preface | iv |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Our Approach: Methodology | 6 |
| Findings: Characteristics of MPOs Most Supportive of Bicycling and Walking | 7 |
| Clear Vision & Goals for Bicycling and Walking | 9 |
| Creating Meaningful Plans | 17 |
| Obtaining Political and Popular Support | 21 |
| Influencing Transportation Funding | 30 |
| Creating Meaningful Policies and Practices: Institutionalization | 37 |
| Conclusion | 39 |



preface

EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR BICYCLING AND WALKING BEGAN TO EXPLORE the performance of agencies charged with implementing the nation's transportation law, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, known as TEA-21. This piece of legislation and its predecessor, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, or ISTEA, provided a dramatically increased level of funding of bicycling and walking plans and projects. We were interested in how the agencies charged with carrying out TEA-21 and ISTEA were using these new funds to improve bicycling and walking as modes of transportation.

Due to the prominent role of state departments of transportation (DOTs) in allocating federal transportation dollars, we began with an analysis of their performance. We introduced our report, titled "Are We There Yet?"¹ by citing Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidance to the state DOTs on TEA-21.² This guidance contains these declarations:

"To varying extents, bicyclists and pedestrians will be present on all highway and transportation facilities where they are permitted and it is clearly the intent of TEA-21 that all new and improved transportation facilities be planned, designed and constructed with this fact in mind."

"Congress clearly intends for bicyclists and pedestrians to have safe, convenient access to the transportation system and sees every transportation improvement as an opportunity to enhance the safety and convenience of the two modes."

We identified four state-level performance benchmarks derived from this and other federal guidance, regarding the accommodation of bicyclists and pedestrians. Based almost entirely on the self-reports of the state DOT bicycle and pedestrian coordinators, we found that most states did not meet these benchmarks.³ Only 11 state DOTs have bicycle and pedestrian plans, and routinely accommodate bicycles and pedestrians in state highway projects.



We are now turning our attention to the role of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in supporting bicycling and walking. The federal government required states to establish MPOs in the early '70s to oversee the creation of coherent regional transportation networks. Partly due to their status as planning rather than implementing agencies and partly due to the traditional role of DOTs as managers of state transportation programs, MPOs do not generally receive transportation funds directly from the federal government.¹

As their power is limited, it was more difficult to evaluate MPOs against a series of benchmarks or objectives. So we focused instead on identifying characteristics of the MPOs that have been most successful in incorporating support for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations into their work. We hope that publicizing these examples will encourage other MPOs to emulate them.

¹ MPOs in non-attainment areas do receive Congestion Management Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. They may also receive other funds according to local policies. We will note several of these examples in this paper.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We very much appreciate the support of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), particularly Alex Taft, DeLania Hardy, and Michael Montag. They were especially helpful in helping us organize our questionnaire and follow-up interview schedule, and compile the questionnaire results. Many thanks go to Barbara McCann for her patience and editorial skill in making this paper far superior to our early efforts. Kudos to the NCBW staff for routinely providing wise counsel. Most of all, we need to acknowledge the time, energy, and efforts of all the MPO staff who participated in this investigation. We applaud your continuing commitment to the welfare of your communities.



introduction

According to the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (www.amp.org/who/about_mpos.html), nearly half of all MPOs are housed within regional planning organizations, with titles such as Association of Governments, Council of Governments, Regional Planning Commission, Transportation Planning Organization, Metropolitan Planning Commission, Community Planning Association, and Planning and Development Commission. Many of these organizations were created in response to earlier federal legislation recognizing the need for “continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative” regional planning. They persist with locally defined responsibilities beyond those assigned to MPOs. For the purposes of this paper, we will consider all of these organizations as MPOs, ignoring their other responsibilities.

IN 1973, CONGRESS SET ASIDE A SMALL PORTION OF EACH state’s funding from the Highway Trust Fund to create Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in each urbanized area with over 50,000 people¹. An MPO includes all of the jurisdictions within a metropolitan area, and is often governed by a board or commission made up of the top elected officials from major counties or cities in the region.² The most significant responsibility handed to MPOs was the creation of Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs). For the first time, both highway and transit projects had to be included in a single planning document, and state and local project sponsors were required to gain approval of MPOs to spend federal transportation funds.

From the start, MPOs faced difficulties due not only to wary state and local officials but to increasingly severe budget limitations. Many states had large backlogs of roadway projects and many of the roads built in the preceding two decades were coming due for repair or replacement. These needs prompted the creation of new federal-aid highway programs that pushed many innovative, multimodal projects to the back burner. Indeed, except in New York City, only a tiny portion of highway funds found their way to mass transit projects, despite the hard-fought battle in Congress in 1972 to allow such transfers.

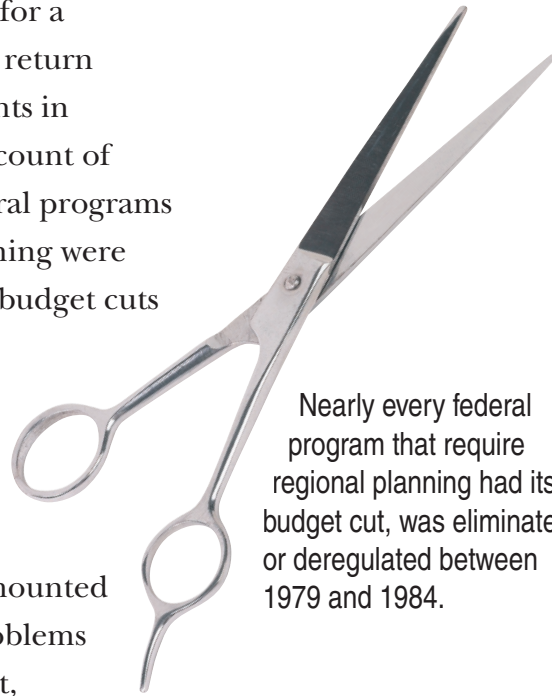
As the energy crisis receded from the public’s memory, programs to encourage fuel-efficient cars and alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle lost political support. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 cemented this



return to the status quo ante with his call for a reduction of the federal bureaucracy and a return to the primacy of state and local governments in transportation planning. According to the count of researcher Bruce McDowell, “38 of 39 federal programs that underwrote or required regional planning were terminated, deregulated or suffered major budget cuts between 1979 and 1984.”

While regional planning may have fallen out of favor, the growth of regional problems continued. Road building continued apace, while traffic congestion mounted and spread over wider areas. Air quality problems caused by auto exhaust continued to mount, and some communities began to recognize the detrimental impact of a one-size-fits-all transportation system. An alliance of environmentalists, mass transit advocates, progressive planners and others urged Congress to consider transportation as needing more federal regulation.

One outcome of this alliance was the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991. ISTEA doubled funding for MPO operations, required MPOs to evaluate multimodal solutions to roadway congestion, broadened public participation in the planning process and explicitly stated that federal transportation dollars could be used for bicycling and walking. The law created two new funding programs (Transportation Enhancements



Nearly every federal program that require regional planning had its budget cut, was eliminated or deregulated between 1979 and 1984.



and Congestion Management/Air Quality) that were intended at least partially for such projects, and required state Departments of Transportation to create a position of bicycle-pedestrian coordinator. Most significantly for MPOs, ISTEA linked investment decisions directly to meeting air quality standards laid out in the Clean Air Act. Suddenly bicycling and walking had a clear source of federal funds, and could be treated as transportation control measures helpful in meeting air-quality requirements.

On the crucial issue of project selection, ISTEA sought to put MPOs on a more equal footing with state transportation departments. Large MPOs assumed lead authority for selecting projects to be undertaken with a few categories of federal funds. State-MPO cooperation was required on the use of the remaining funding. In deciding among projects, and in their long-range planning activities, MPOs were required to consider a wide range of economic, environmental and social goals. They also had to “fiscally constrain” their long-range plans and short-range TIPs. This meant that MPOs had to create realistic, multi-year agendas of projects matched with available funds.

However, state departments of transportation continued to receive most federal funds, and retained major responsibilities for selecting and implementing projects. During the early 90’s, most state departments of transportation resisted sharing their power with MPOs. For their part, many MPOs were ill prepared for the changes brought about by ISTEA. After years of minimal funding and responsibilities, MPOs were thrust into the position of being key players in transportation planning for their regions. Many had to hire new staff and quickly gear up to meet the ambitious new requirements.

More recently, there have been considerable signs of progress in achieving the goals of ISTEA, and its successor, the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21). The project selection and fiscal constraint requirements have led to a planning process that is “more rational than political,” according a 1996 Government Accounting Office survey of MPO officials. At federal hearings conducted around the country in 1996 testimony was presented that “many states and MPOs, after some awkward first steps, had formed useful and productive relationships.” The hearings also found that “ISTEA’s



emphasis on multimodal transportation has been a catalyst for changing the overall mix of transportation options.” Yet, as noted in a report by the Brookings Institution, MPOs remained somewhat hamstrung by the slow response of the state DOTs to the need for change.

Most notably, most states have failed to utilize the tools and discretion afforded them by ISTEA and TEA-21 to meaningfully address the worsening transportation problems bogging down their metropolitan regions. The first disappointment is the fact that, after ten years, most states have still not embraced the intent of federal law and devolved sufficient powers and responsibilities to their metropolitan areas.¹

But the changes begun in 1990 have been an unmistakable boon to walking and bicycling. More federal money has been invested in bicycling and walking projects in the last ten years under ISTEA and TEA-21 than was spent in the forty years before 1991.² This has put more MPOs in the business of creating bicycle and walking plans, while some have begun actively supporting various bike-ped projects.



A cascading set of conclusions can be drawn from this overview. First, rational transportation policy requires strong planning and execution at the regional level. Strong regional contributions require, in turn, the

ISTEA and TEA-21 programs have produced a much-needed boon to bicycling and walking.



cooperation of all levels of government. MPOs have the task of gaining and retaining this cooperation without being in a position to directly implement most of the changes they are required to oversee. At the same time, MPOs are motivated to push for new types of projects, such as those supporting bicycling and walking, because of vastly increased resources, and the incentive provided by the link between transportation planning and the Clean Air Act.

We now turn to an exploration of how MPOs are managing these challenges as they seek to improve bicycling and walking.

¹ Bruce Katz, Robert Puentes, and Scott Bernstein, "TEA-21 Reauthorization: Getting Transportation Right for Metropolitan America", The Brookings Institution Series on Transportation Reform, March, 2003, p.5.

² Michelle Garland, "Where's the Money Going?: TE & Bicycle & Pedestrian Spending in the 1990s", Connections: The National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse Newsletter", May, 2000.



our approach: methodology

WE MET WITH THE STAFF OF THE ASSOCIATION OF Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) to create a list of attributes most likely to contribute to success in accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians. After several iterations, we agreed to a twelve-item questionnaire.¹ AMPO sent it to all 340 MPOs then in existence.² We received 144 responses³ – estimated as the largest number of responses to any AMPO survey in recent memory.

We augmented the survey data with phone interviews of representatives from 58 MPOs. These MPOs were selected by the following criteria:

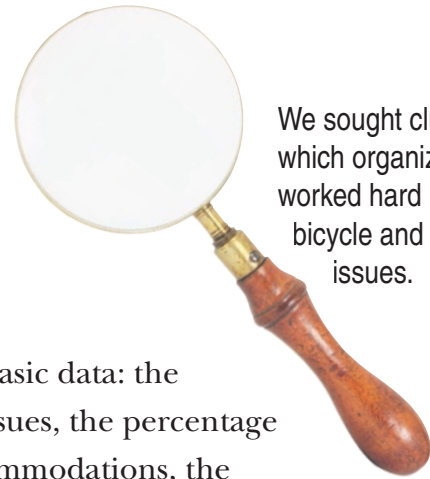
- they reported devoting more than five hours per week to bike-ped issues;
- they reported having a bicycle plan, a pedestrian plan, or a combined bike-ped plan; and
- they reported some noteworthy accomplishments in accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians, such as building a bike route network, participating in a walkable community workshop, providing technical training to planners and engineers, etc.

In addition, some MPOs were interviewed on the recommendation of AMPO or NCBW staff as organizations about which we should know more. We used the interviews to check our initial assumptions of key MPO attributes, identify the challenges MPOs face in meeting the needs of their regions, and explore in more detail how several MPOs have overcome these challenges.

Because of MPOs' limited authority, we present our findings without setting benchmarks. Rather than offering a report card of how well various MPOs support bicycling and walking, we looked for examples of best practices – of regional plans, policies and practices that are likely to produce projects that address the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists. We will point out several characteristics of those MPOs that, in our assessment, are most successful in this regard, discuss various challenges they face in fulfilling their mission, and how many MPOs have met these challenges. We hope that sharing these examples will encourage their adoption by still more MPOs.



Findings: Characteristics of MPOs most supportive of bicycling and walking



We sought clues as to which organizations worked hard in promoting bicycle and pedestrian issues.

The twelve items in our questionnaire elicited some basic data: the number of MPOs who have staff assigned to bike-ped issues, the percentage who allot more than five hours a week to bike-ped accommodations, the number who have citizen committees to provide feedback on these issues, and so on. These answers are instructive, but do not get at the core issues: which MPOs are really making a difference? Which have been able to help build neighborhoods and communities where people can get around by walking and biking – alone and in combination with transit and yes, cars? And what are the characteristics of those most successful MPOs?

The key challenge to finding these answers lies in determining success. How do we know which MPOs have been most successful? How do we define success? How do we know whether success, however defined, was the result of the MPO efforts or in spite of them?

We do not have clear answers to these questions. As we have stated, given the limited statutory role of MPOs as regional planners, and given the preponderance of funding that goes to state DOTs and not MPOs, it is difficult to tease out the impact of MPOs and assign weight to their contributions.

Yet there are clues. Some MPOs have consciously gone beyond their role as regional planners to actively generate regional support for bicycling and walking. Some have developed their knowledge of transportation funding to be more successful in getting bike-ped projects built. Some have written exceptionally strong bike-ped plans, boldly holding themselves accountable for meeting specific goals. Some have helped transform these exemplary plans into practices and policies.



We will use the rest of this paper to explore these clues, hoping to encourage all MPOs to emulate the examples of their seemingly most progressive counterparts. Specifically, we will highlight MPOs who have adopted some or all of the following five overlapping characteristics:

- a clear vision and commitment to bicycling and walking
- the will to create meaningful plans
- an ability to obtain political support for their goals,
- an especially keen understanding of how transportation money flows and how to influence this flow, and
- the determination to create practices that make change routine.



Clear vision & goals for bicycling and walking

MPOs CAN PERFORM THEIR ROLE AS REGIONAL PLANNER by adopting one of a continuum of styles. An MPO can be a servant, doing the bidding of state DOTs and local governments; it can be a facilitator, helping local governments find funding, write grant proposals, train planners, and provide support to state DOTs on prioritizing local projects. Or an MPO can be visionary, setting ambitious goals for biking and walking, encouraging communities to adopt zoning ordinances to control sprawl, conducting walkable community workshops, and other activities. Fortunately, we did not find examples of servants.



Successful MPOs take the long view when setting goals.

(Perhaps some exist among the MPOs who did not participate in our study.) And equally fortunate, we found several examples of MPOs who have adopted or are in the process of adopting the role of visionary leader. Excerpts from the interviews provide some examples:

We have a three-pronged approach:

1. Reinvest in downtown. We're addressing urban sprawl, bringing growth back to downtown, making the area more walkable, bringing business back to downtown.
2. Connecting high use centers. We want people to be able to live, work, shop, and play in the same area. Five to seven centers should be highly developed with mixed uses. Then, one day, we'll connect these to transit. It will be biking- walking- and transit-friendly.
3. Light rail has been proposed in Gainesville, but we won't have the population density to support it for fifty years. So we chose Archer Road to load up with dense development to support a high level of transit. Fifty years from now, it will be our light rail corridor. (Gainesville, FL)¹

We don't select projects. We analyze their needs. We give them the information and the tools they need. 'Here's how we view the situation regarding all modes and all segments. Here's where your deficiencies are. Here are our goals and objectives.' This is a major step forward. In the past, we merely processed their desired projects. (SEMCOG, Detroit, MI)



We need to see if we can mitigate what has happened due to sprawl. Can we slow down traffic, and let residents regain control of their streets? We have a conflict – more pedestrians in low income neighborhoods. ... We want to encourage people to move back into town. We need to ask: what is a good facility? What's a good handicap ramp? How can we accommodate seniors? I have to drive my older parents around. So do others. We can't always be there. So, we need improvements! (Columbus, OH)

We're trying to do more pedestrian planning. We're trying to tie land use planning, transit and development to pedestrian problems. Our sprawling development is driving this issue. It's a tough sell, but we want to plan for pedestrians. ... We're in an advocacy position. This is hard for us. We're trying to create a change in mindset. (Tulsa, OK)

With a clear vision, it is easier to tackle ambitious projects. Several MPOs gave examples of how they are setting new standards and encouraging change in their region.

We're trying to create a bike parking requirement in our parking ordinance. If there is a land development project requiring a parking plan, at a certain threshold, there would have to be bike parking spaces equal to 5% of car parking spaces. A certain number of these bike spaces would have to be covered. There would be a shower requirement for large projects – like a building housing 250 employees. This last item is creating the most displeasure. (City of Charlotte, NC)²

One thing we're trying that is fairly unique: We are trying to adopt a clear corridor around every roadway in the county (outside of some developments). Nothing would be built within a certain width around planned roads – nothing new would be built along these roads. We envision bike paths. This is a very long-range solution to the problem. ... All we can do is encourage local communities and try to save space for paths and lanes later on. (Kankakee, IL)

We want to build demand for bike-ped facilities. We created a regional on-line transportation web site – 511.org. One page is bicycling in the Bay Area. There is a similar web site in the LA area – bikemetro.com. We are hoping to get a grant to build an on-line bike mapping tool. This would link the bike plans of all regions to show people all bike facilities. (MTC, Oakland, CA)



Why have some MPOs been able to create a vision and advocate more effectively? At the most fundamental level, staff need to be assigned to and feel ownership of the issue, and need to have the time to pursue it. This suggests a predisposition toward moving the region to consider the value of biking and walking in all projects. Our survey found 73% of responding MPOs have assigned bike-ped issues to a specific person or persons. We found examples of this commitment among the smallest and the largest MPOs.³ The Dover-Kent County MPO in Delaware has four staff members. The executive director has assigned herself the lead in bike-ped issues. At the other end of the spectrum, the Metropolitan Planning Commission responsible for the San Francisco Bay area has 137 staff members listed on its web site. It has assigned bicycle issues to one full-time individual and pedestrian issues to another.

Among the 27% of MPOs who said they do not have someone specifically assigned to bike-ped issues are some who have spread this task among most or all staff members, under the assumption that bike-ped issues are everyone's responsibility.

We all deal with bike-ped issues, but I'm like the lead on bike stuff. But we can all back each other up. The key is that, I'm not just the bike planner. I do a range of other stuff. We are all generalists with specific program areas of focus. (Portland, OR)

So, we have to consider some of the 27% who answered "no" may in fact be providing sufficient support to bike-ped issues.

Next, MPOs must allocate a reasonable portion of their time to bike-ped issues to be able to develop the vision and goals behind an advocacy approach. Our survey yielded the following results on this question:





Approximately how many hours per week does your MPO spend on bike-ped issues?

0 – 5: 53%

6-15: 25%

16-25: 9%

26-40: 11%

40+: 3%

Our subjective reaction to the results of this question was disappointment, as just over half of the respondents estimated spending no more than five hours a week on bike-ped issues. Even with a small staff of five people, this would yield no more than 2.5% of total time spent on these modes. We then considered the 58% of MPOs who did not to respond to our survey, and shuddered.

Yet taking a more objective stance, we could not cite a recommended number of hours or percentage of staff time to be spent on bike-ped issues. We are more concerned with results than the time spent creating them. So, we simply suggest that MPOs estimate the amount of time they spend supporting bike-ped issues, ask themselves whether they are achieving the goal set by FHWA in interpreting TEA-21 – providing suitable accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians everywhere they are permitted, and adjust their focus and time spent on bike-ped accommodations to hasten their compliance with this goal.

Not only must staff and reasonable staff time be assigned to bike-ped issues, the personal commitment of the staff can make a real difference. As cited above, many MPO staff demonstrate a passionate and indefatigable commitment to help effect the changes necessary to support bicycling and walking. Here are some additional examples:

We are excited about our waterfront (Ohio River). We have a waterfront park being constructed. We have a multi-use trail that runs through the entire county. Kentucky will expand this as part of a roadway improvement project. That's amazing. We're going to tie that in with a southern Indiana greenway project. This network offers great commuting opportunities. ... We've been separated from our river for a long time. (Kentuckianna – KY-IN)



In the beginning, the key was that Florida, among other states, had received funds from Exxon in compensation for allegations of overcharging for gas. The money found its way to state departments of transportation. Dan Burden (as state bike-ped coordinator) encouraged Tallahassee to allocate much of these funds for bike-ped programs. Dan, who's wife was a teacher, also produced a model elementary school bicycle safety curriculum. When it came time for me to present our bike-ped plan to our MPO, Dan was there in support. He got the legislature to recognize bike-ped as modes of transportation. The Secretary issued a rule requiring bike-ped facilities on all projects. It got into the process. (Brevard, FL)

Activities themselves can also suggest a visionary approach to bicycling and walking. Some MPOs directly engage in activities supportive of bicycling and walking, in addition to their more traditional role as planners. We asked MPOs to indicate the activities in which they had been engaged over the past three years from the following list:

- BLOS (Bicycle Level of Service) inventory
- technical training to engineers and planners on creating bike-ped accommodations
- maps highlighting bike routes
- walkable community workshops
- bike friendly community workshops
- other workshops highlighting the need to improve accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians
- providing planning assistance to local governments
- creating design guidelines for bike-ped accommodations
- collecting data on the number of bicyclists and pedestrians using roads, sidewalks and trails
- collecting data on bicyclist and pedestrian injuries and fatalities
- other projects

Virtually all of the AMPO survey respondents reported being engaged in at least one of these activities. Due to a software problem, respondents were unable to check multiple boxes. However, most used the “other” and “comments” boxes to



fully answer this question. The three most common programs and projects were: providing planning guidance to local governments, conducting workshops (combining walkable community workshops, bike friendly workshops and similar workshops), and creating maps highlighting bike routes.

Adopting such a visionary approach is critically important to the successful pursuit of bicycling and walking as legitimate modes of transportation. This attitude appears to significantly contribute to the other four characteristics of successful MPOs for bicycling and walking: creating meaningful plans, obtaining political and popular support, successfully obtaining funding, and institutionalizing change by transforming plans into Practices.

¹ All citations are quotes or paraphrases from the interviews.

² Although not from an MPO, we included this item as an example of social activism that is worth emulating.

³ But we do not deny the challenges faced by small MPOs in dealing with the myriad of issues they face. For example, a recent Brookings Institution report noted that many small MPOs “lack adequate staff and financial resources. A recent analysis, for example, found that 58 percent of small MPOs (those representing populations of less than 200,000) cannot perform basic transportation modeling or forecasting. Additionally, 16 percent of small MPOs do not even have a full-time transportation planner. Bruce Katz, Robert Puentes, and Scott Bernstein, TEA-21 Reauthorization: Getting Transportation Right for Metropolitan America, The Brookings Institution Series on Transportation Reform, March, 2003, p6.

Of perhaps more interest than the most popular programs and projects is the number of MPOs who claimed they were engaged in several. Twenty respondents overcame the software glitch to report they were engaged in five or more of the items on the list. (These 20 MPOs are: Boston (MA), Brown County (WI), Centre Region (PA), Charlottesville-Albemarle (VA), Duluth (MN), Genesee County (MI), Lee Co (FL), MetroPlan Orlando (FL), Metropolitan Transportation Commission (CA), Mountainland (UT), NOACA (OH), Pioneer Valley (MA), Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County (NY), Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, San Antonio-Bexar County (TX), San Diego Association of Governments (CA), Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (NY), Texarkana (TX-AR), Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (MI), and WILMAPCO (DE).) Realizing that we have no data to suggest these twenty MPOs are somehow more successful than others in accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians – we have only their self-reports that they have engaged in a number of different programs and projects and no idea as to the impact of their engagement, it still appears useful to compare their responses with the total, and offer a few speculations on the differences and similarities.



1. Does your MPO assign bike-ped issues to a specific person or persons?

| | |
|--------|--------|
| Total | Sample |
| Y: 73% | 90% |
| N: 27% | 10% |

2. Approximately how many hours per week does your MPO spend on bike-ped issues?

| | |
|------------|--------|
| Total | Sample |
| 0 – 5: 53% | 20% |
| 6-15: 25% | 30% |
| 16-25: 9% | 20% |
| 26-40: 11% | 30% |
| 40+: 3% | 0% |

3. Which of the following bike-ped related committees does your MPO have?

| | |
|------------------------------|---------|
| Total | Sample: |
| Any mentioned committee: 74% | 65% |
| No committee mentioned: 26% | 35% |

4. Does your MPO have any of the following?

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Total | Sample |
| Separate bike plan: 25% | 25% |
| Separate ped plan: 13% | 15% |
| Separate bike-ped plan: 30% | 30% |
| Bike-ped plan in progress: 29% | 30% |
| None of the above: 22% | 25% |

5. Are bicycling and walking addressed in your Long Range Plan?

| | |
|--------|--------|
| Total | Sample |
| Y: 96% | 95% |
| N: 4% | 5% |

6. Are bicycling and walking projects part of your TIP?

| | |
|--------|--------|
| Total | Sample |
| Y: 92% | 95% |
| N: 8% | 5% |

7. Has your MPO's bike-ped plan been endorsed or adopted by the local governments in your MPO's area?

| | |
|--------|--------|
| Total | Sample |
| Y: 54% | 35% |
| N: 46% | 65% |

8. What funds has your MPO used in the past three years to fund bike-ped projects?

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Total | Sample |
| CMAQ: 28% | 42% |
| Enhancements: 90% | 100% |
| Safety Set Asides: 6% | 5% |
| Urbanized STP: 35% | 55% |
| State STP: 15% | 11% |
| NHS: 6% | 0% |
| Other: 28% | 42% |

As one might expect, the twenty MPOs are more likely to assign a person to bike-ped issues, spend more time on these issues, and overwhelmingly report including bike-ped projects in their LRPs and TIPs. On the other hand, we would have expected these twenty to be more likely to have committees designed to encourage public input into bike-ped issues.

Perhaps the presence of committees is less important than the presence of practices that encourage input. The Mid-Region Council of Governments in Albuquerque is not alone in discovering this:

We are breaking from the traditional model of public meetings and open houses in one location. We are emphasizing going to community groups and neighborhood association meetings. We are more in an outreach approach. We are able to reach more people and they are more satisfied.

It appears necessary to augment public committees with other strategies. The representative from the Chippewa-Eau Claire MPO stated the case well:



We have no citizens advisory committees. It is hard to get citizens interested in a 20-year plan. They get interested only when they see stakes driven into their ground.

As we noted earlier, we are in favor of bicycle, pedestrian, and bike-ped plans – as means to the end of creating a multimodal transportation system.

That the twenty MPOs are no more likely to have plans could suggest that outcomes, such as creating projects and programs designed to advance their progress toward this transportation system, are not dependent on plans alone. Likewise, formal adoption of regional plans by local governments may be less important than informal adoption through the membership of local governments on MPO policy boards, and less important than the construction of multimodal projects.

On this general theme of valuing projects over plans, one might have predicted the results to the funding question: the twenty MPOs who reported being engaged in various projects appear to be more successful in finding funding sources for their efforts; or, they happened to live in states whose departments of transportation are more amenable to helping secure a variety of funds for bike-ped projects.





Creating meaningful plans

A CLEAR VISION SHOULD LEAD TO MEANINGFUL PLANS. YET, what are the characteristics of meaningful plans? In considering this task, we used federal guidance issued on the subject (see sidebar).

Ninety-six percent of respondents to our survey reported that bicycling and walking are addressed in their long range transportation plan, while 92% reported bicycling and walking projects are included in their Transportation Improvement Program. Somewhat fewer, 78%, stated having a bicycle plan, a pedestrian plan, a combined bike-ped plan, or one in the works¹. To simplify our analysis, we focused on the first characteristic of acceptable plans cited by the FHWA: whether MPOs created plans with “clear and objectively measurable” goals. A recent Brookings Institution report lends support to our focus, suggesting that in exchange for greater funding, MPOs should be held accountable for the degree of progress in meeting clearly defined goals²

As we discussed in “Are We There Yet?” the FHWA has issued guidance on the subject (“FHWA Guidance: Bicycle and Pedestrian Provisions of Federal Transportation Legislation”, February 24 1999”).

“As is the case for the broader transportation plans, the bicycle and pedestrian element of transportation plans should include:

1. Vision and Goal Statements, and Performance Criteria:

The vision statements express concisely what the plan is expected to accomplish. ... The goals to reach the vision, and the time frame for reaching each goal should be spelled out. They should be clear and objectively measurable. ... Network and performance criteria also should be developed. ... Specific State and MPO goals and performance criteria should be developed to support locally determined bicycle and pedestrian program implementation efforts. ...

2. Assessment of Current Conditions and Needs:

A baseline of information should be collected on which to base strategies and actions necessary to reach the vision and goal statements. The information collected in this step should determine the extent to which the existing transportation system meets the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians. ...

3. The identification of activities required to meet the vision and goals developed above. ...

4. Implementation of the bicycle and pedestrian elements in the statewide and MPO transportation plans and transportation improvement programs: ...

5. Evaluation of progress: ...

6. Public Involvement: ...”



However, we found no more than 14 MPOs with plans containing measurable goals.³ Some of these MPOs created several such goals:

Puget Sound, WA:

- Approximately 800 miles of new paths and bikeways by 2010, including: 529 miles of separated off-road bicycle/pedestrian paths and 286 miles of on-road bicycle lanes;
- Approximately 1,200 additional miles of new paths and bikeways by 2030, including 255 miles of off-road bicycle/pedestrian paths and 945 miles of on-road bicycle lanes;
- 5 commuter bicycle stations by 2010;
- Pedestrian improvements in selected transit station and designated urban center zones

Buffalo, NY:

- Increase miles of bikeway by 15%;
- Increase miles of sidewalks by 15%;
- Reduce vehicle hours of delay by 10%;
- Reduce trip times by 10%;
- Provide 100% all mode access to selected sites;
- Maintain pollutant emissions at 2002 levels; [and several others]

Others modeled their goals after those cited in the 1994 FHWA National Bicycling and Walking Study:

Delaware Valley, PA/NJ:

(D)oubling the percentage of trips by foot and bicycle, from a region-wide average of 8.5% to 17% of all trips; and reducing the number of injuries and fatalities suffered by bicyclists and pedestrians by 10%.

Northwestern Indiana:

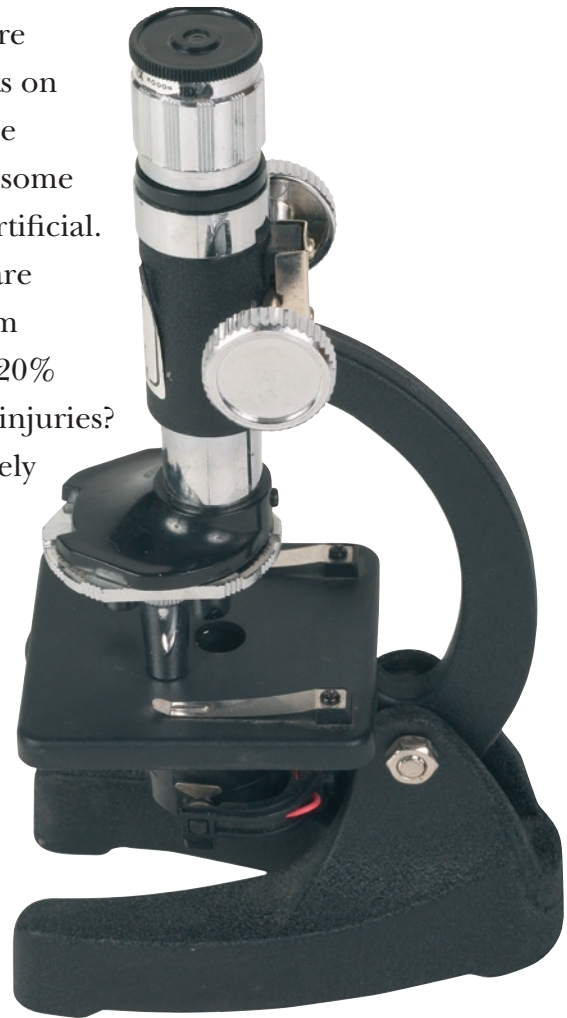
Develop a system of bikeways and bicycling programs that promote bicycling as a transportation alternative for work trips thereby increasing bicycle work trips and overall bicycle usage by 2% by 2000 and an increase of 10% by the year 2010.

We acknowledge the existence of arguments against MPOs creating plans with measurable goals. One posits the lack of evidence to suggest that plans with measurable goals are more likely to lead to routine bike-ped accommodations in all projects, an increase in bike-ped mode share, a reduction of bike-ped injuries, or any other desired outcome. A second focuses on the daunting challenge of getting multiple local



governments to agree to a specific set of outcomes. MPOs might do better to create plans with more general goals, and work with local governments on building specific projects likely to support these goals. A third argument proposes that at least some measurable goals in transportation plans are artificial. Selecting a goal of a 10% increase in mode share or a 25% reduction in injuries is based on whim or political compromise. Why not shoot for a 20% increase in mode share or a 50% reduction in injuries? There is no objective basis for these goals, largely because so few MPOs have created databases that might be used to generate them.

We agree that plans with measurable goals may not be more likely to yield positive outcomes than those without. In fact, we have no evidence suggesting that the presence of plans of any stripe yield positive results. Yet if we believe that plans are important to provide a direction, does it not follow that more effective plans are those that provide more detailed directions? Do we believe it important to have our communities or our regions agree that a worthwhile goal is to reduce injuries, reduce congestion, or improve air quality? If so, does it not follow that it is important for us to measure our progress toward our goal, to be able to modify our tactics so that we spend more time and money on those that appear to be more effective while de-emphasizing those that do not? So, we suggest that the effort is worth making – that creating plans with measurable goals appears to be useful in moving effectively toward achieving them.



Projects are often under a microscope, so the more measurable the goals, the better.



The development of measurable goals that are not artificial, that are grounded in data purposefully created to address community characteristics and community concerns might occur like this: An MPO considers the capacity of the region's road system and the estimated growth in the region's population over time. It then estimates the growth in the number of trips (assuming no change in mode shares, increases in transit capacity, dramatic shifts in the characteristics of new development, etc.). Then, as a starting point, the MPO and local governments assume as a regional goal the absorption of this population increase without increasing the capacity of the road system. The MPO then estimates the amount of trips that could be absorbed by: zoning ordinances that encourage more dense, multi-use development; increased transit capacity; the introduction of intelligent transportation technologies; costing mechanisms (i.e. charging tolls based on time of day); improving bike-ped access; etc. It would also compare the costs and benefits of these various strategies.⁴ Or, the MPO might consider three scenarios: 1. No increase in highway capacity, requiring a plan for absorbing all new trips through bike-ped-transit-carpooling-demand costing, etc.; 2. Increase highway capacity to match increases in new trips; 3. Posit some middle ground. Then, assess decide on an option. Goals for increased bike-ped share, reduced bike-ped injuries, and the like will be consistent with an overall plan, not just arbitrary figures.

Progress has been made in generating these data and making these analyses. In a later section of this paper, we cite several MPOs who have begun this effort. We suggest others take up the call.

¹ We support separate bike, ped, and bike-ped plans. They tend to provide a level of detail beyond that described in a chapter or an element within a long-range plan. Yet if we agree with FHWA that the ultimate goal is to create a truly integrated transportation system, separate bike-ped plans only represent an intermediate stage of this development. For example, the Metro MPO in Portland, Oregon incorporated their bike-ped planning, policies, goals, and maps into their long-range plan. They believe this facilitates their creation of a multimodal system by treating bicycling and walking in the same fashion as other modes. So, we suggest that MPOs without separate bike-ped plans examine the reasons why. Do they have long-range plans representing well-integrated transportation systems, with walking and biking as co-equal partners? If not, they might consider creating separate bike-ped plans, and evolving to the creation of a long range plan and policies that lead toward the goal of a multimodal system.

² Robert Puentes and Linda Bailey, "Improving Metropolitan Decision Making in Transportation: Greater Funding and Devolution for Greater Accountability", The Brookings Institution Series on Transportation Reform, October, 2003, p.16.

³ We were unable to review all plans. When we could not, we assumed the accuracy of the MPO representative's response. It is also possible that other MPOs do in fact have policies of which we were unaware that met this criterion. We provided the opportunity for all MPOs to comment on a draft of this paper in hopes of clarifying questions like this. We continue to encourage MPOs to update us on their progress in creating bike-ped plans with measurable and meaningful goals.

⁴ See for example: "Transportation Cost and Benefit Analysis Techniques, Estimates and Implications", Victoria Transport Policy Institute, <http://www.vtppi.org/tcasum.pdf>



To cite from one of the publications of the Victoria Transport Policy Institute:

If you ask people to list transportation costs, most would probably include fares for transit, rail and air travel, and vehicle operating expenses. Motorists might include vehicle ownership expenses. Some might include their nonmarket costs such as travel time, comfort and accident risk. They might complain about congestion and other traffic impacts they bear, but may ignore the congestion and other negative impacts they impose. Many might overlook other external costs, such as public expenditures on roads, parking, traffic services, and medical services for crash victims, and particularly nonmarket externalities such as pollution and other ecological impacts. What are the true costs of transport? All of these, of course. ... Advocates for the current transport system often argue that automobile dependency reflects consumer preferences, but costing research indicates otherwise. Current high levels of motor vehicle use reflect market distortions. Transportation in general, and automobile travel in particular, are underpriced. Motorists typically perceive less than half of their total costs when making trip decisions. In addition, transport planning practices that overlook significant costs skew investment and policy decisions toward automobile dependency and away from alternatives that may be more efficient and equitable overall. As a result, consumers lack viable travel alternatives. Given a less distorted market consumers would choose to drive less and be better off as a result. How much less? It is difficult to predict exactly, but reductions of 40-60% are possible over the long term. (emphasis added) Todd Litman, "Transportation Cost Analysis: Summary", Victoria Transport Policy Institute, November 29, 1999, p 41. (www.vtpi.org/tcasum.pdf)

Obtaining political and popular support

THE ECONOMIC ARGUMENT

The single factor most likely to encourage an MPO's tendency to advocate for social change is political support. In a political environment ready, even eager for a multimodal transportation system, joining the movement is relatively easy. But how are such environments created? One explanation is the link between political reality and economic reality. It is no surprise that communities like Gainesville, Florida; Madison, Wisconsin; Davis, California; and Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota are highly supportive of bicycling and walking. The economies of all these cities are strongly influenced by the universities within their boundaries. The schools and the businesses that surround them are dependent upon students being able to get around campus, and around town, by transit, bike and on foot.

While we applaud the success of these regions in creating



favorable conditions for walking and biking, at least in part because of the underlying economic imperative, other MPOs could do more to exploit the economics of bicycling and walking in their urban and suburban regions. We recommend MPOs and others consider the work done by Todd Litman and the Victoria Transport Policy Institute. (see sidebar)

ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY AWARENESS

An equally fundamental way of developing political support is encouraging community awareness of the need for change, of the existence of a transportation problem that has not been solved by traditional remedies.

We have a very diverse region. Some areas are newly urbanizing and haven't dealt with this problem – they have fairly low density development. Bike-ped travel hasn't been as much of an issue. But in the city of Chicago, there is a lot of political support for bike-ped projects. Our highly urbanized areas support it. (Chicago, IL)

We are a rapidly growing area. Since 1990, we have had a 56% growth in population. We are changing from rural to urban. We are now asking ourselves how to design streets that are urban in character. We have roads without shoulders, sidewalks and lighting. (SW Washington)

Bike-ped planning is not just a local concern. To accomplish regional objectives, we must address bike-ped improvements. Traffic congestion has increased. Our transit improvements have increased. But this is not enough if people can't walk and bike to and from transit. (Puget Sound, WA)

One MPO respondent concisely explained the difficulty of effecting change in the absence of a perceived need:

We do not have a mindset to consider bicycling, walking and transit. We do not have a high density of land use. We do not have a transit mentality. We do not have congestion issues. There is no economic incentive to walk, bike, use transit. Here, land is still cheap. (Tulsa, OK)



In the absence of public awareness, MPOs have participated in its creation. One approach has been to work with a politician who supports bike-ped accommodations. Another is to take advantage of apparent political support to pursue a derivative strategy.

The mayor wants a circumferential bike trail around the city. (New York, NY)

Our Congressman is on the transportation committee. He has been very helpful. Senator Patty Murray is the ranking transportation member. She appreciates the value of trails and has been very interested in working with us on biking and walking issues. (Whatcom, WA)

We were gearing up for a major campaign to emphasize bike-ped projects, with a goal of providing 1% of funds for these. I think we have a high probability of achieving this goal, especially now that the VDOT secretary has made positive comments about the need for bike-ped projects. (Charlottesville, VA)

Other MPOs have linked bike-ped accommodations to public, and hence political approval for outdoor activities and the pursuit of healthy lifestyles.

People here have gotten the message that having alternatives to single occupancy vehicles is good. They were first thinking of paths as recreational. Now they have begun to see them as transportation. We have a lot of people interested in outdoor activities and physical activities. (Chittenden County, VT).

I attribute the success we have had to the attitudes and perceptions of the younger generation of people, and the fact that in our public information process, these folks have achieved a high profile. The politicians have heard from enough of the people at large. In the past, bicycling and walking was viewed as recreation. That perception is changing. The younger generation, people in their 20s and 30s are now asking for facilities to enable them to commute via bicycling and walking. (Abilene, TX)

We are beginning a partnership with health professionals – becoming a part of their system and their funding mechanisms. One of our past problems was limiting our focus to the transportation issue. Health issues have had an impact on our population. They have helped gain public support. (Binghamton, NY)



Perhaps the best way of generating public support is nurturing early expressions of interest. To do this, MPOs must have a structure in place to encourage public comments in favor of bicycling and walking. We agree with the FHWA that obtaining public involvement is critical to the success of MPO efforts. One means of obtaining this support is the establishment of various citizen committees, or mixing citizens with planning professionals and elected officials in other committees. 74% of our respondents stated they had at least one such committee that included bike-ped issues. In our interviews, we found many good examples of MPOs encouraging public involvement. Among them are the following:

Dover/Kent MPO won AMPO's 2002 Outstanding Overall Achievement Award for MPOs under 200,000 population for its public outreach efforts. The citation notes that "(s)ince 1992, the Dover/Kent MPO has made it a priority to maximize public participation in the metropolitan planning process by taking advantage of partnerships, networks, volunteers, and traditional media outlets. They annually partner with area organizations and agencies including the Delaware Department of Transportation and City of Dover to promote Bike to Work Month and bicycle safety programs. The Public Advisory Committee is an active member of the Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce, holds bi-monthly meetings throughout Kent County, distributes bi-lingual information and recently expanded its ranks to better reflect Kent's diverse population. The Kent/Dover MPO works with the public/private Ozone Action Partnership of Delaware on educational and outreach material, advocates the use of alternative fuels to improve air quality with the Delaware Clean State Program and began an Elderly Mobility Initiative to bring together older residents and service providers to plan for the transportation needs of the elderly community."

We have a board of trustees that consists of elected officials plus some advocates. (Note: This was the only example we found of an MPO governing body composed in part of members of the public.)
(Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana Regional Council of Governments)



We saw a high rate of injuries involving our children walking and biking. In response, we improved our cooperation with the local school boards. We created one of the first bike-ed training programs in the country. We now have some traffic safety education in all elementary schools in the county. Physical education teachers love it – they are teaching a life skill. We instituted this area’s first crossing guard training. It is now mandatory state-wide. We focus on improving safety on school trips. We are very active in bike helmet education. We have partnered with law enforcement and the local hospital on this. The Centers for Disease Control has been a big sponsor. We developed an evaluation checklist to evaluate the safety of school bus stops. We do 70-plus bike rodeos each year. We participate in a joint evaluation of traffic conditions at schools. Principals get advice from us on how to handle transportation issues. We have a bottoms-up approach to rural and urban greenway planning. (Brevard, FL)

Most MPOs we interviewed have some process to encourage public input. We heard many examples of MPOs seeking comments on bike-ped plans and bike-ped portions of TIPs. We applaud these efforts and encourage all MPOs to create regular forums for public comment on all transportation issues.¹

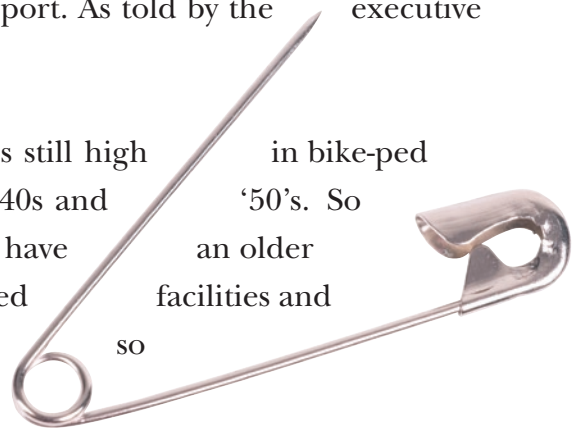
USING THE SAFETY ARGUMENT

Elected officials respond best to arguments that are clear, concise and popular. If to this mix can be added a sense of urgency, so much the better. Some years ago, the Brevard County MPO began such a campaign to improve the safety of children walking and bicycling in their neighborhoods. We mentioned their efforts earlier, noting their enthusiasm and their ability to generate public support. As told by the executive director:

We started with data – on the deaths of kids. It’s still high crashes. So many of our roads were built in the ‘40s and many obsolete facilities and so little revenue. We have population. Put those people into poorly designed you have problems. Plus, our weather is good, people are out there exposed to danger.

in bike-ped ‘50’s. So an older facilities and

so





With the support of these data came a number of excellent bike-ped safety programs. Yet before citing the collection and publication of safety data as potentially effective ways to generate political support, let us add a word of caution. Consider that the real threats, as noted by Brevard County, are the road and sidewalk conditions. (We might add to this the hazards imposed by aggressive, inattentive, and impaired driving.) To MPOs considering this tactic: be wary of the potential backlash of public opinion arguing that the real culprit is the inherent danger in bicycling and walking; that limiting bike-ped facilities will limit injuries.²

Having issued this caveat, other MPOs have nevertheless begun using the safety message.

The state reacted positively to our request to develop a database to gather safety issues. We will use crash data already created. We'll include land use patterns and present facilities. We'll develop a more comprehensive analysis on how to improve safety in that location. This will take three years, if approved. (Albuquerque, NM)

We are going to focus on safety information and safety data – our federal partners suggest we concentrate on safety and public health in general. We'll consider the relationship between bike and pedestrian improvements and public health – like walk to school programs. And, air quality has improved dramatically in our region – supported by CMAQ. We will have data on crashes and fatalities, discussions of population distributions by age and injury rates per million trips. Rates are not necessarily correlated with where most fatalities are occurring. Rural areas have high rates of fatalities, but travel levels are not very high. There seems to be a correlation between auto crashes and injuries and pedestrian and cyclist crashes and injuries. There may be a relationship between vehicle speed and some of these rates. Injury and fatality rates seem highly correlated with socioeconomic status. The intervening variable may be the relationship between auto ownership, non-motorized travel and socioeconomic status. (Chicago, IL)

We are reactive from the standpoint of safety. Pedestrian fatalities prompted emergency efforts to



seek safety funds to develop facilities – pedestrian underpass, overpass, etc. The city of Eau Claire improved some pedestrian crossings. There seems to be a growing recognition that the city is divided by an arterial route system, and that the present crosswalks are not adequate. As more development occurs, as the residential communities across the highway from commercial areas continue to grow, the need for physical accommodations increases. Funding is a factor. There is a large chunk of money in safety programs. Municipalities and the DOT are more apt to go the extra mile with these projects because of the possibility of additional money. (Eau Claire, WI)

COLLECTING AND PUBLISHING DATA

As we have seen, data can be used to gain political and public support for bike-ped accommodations. Developing facility inventories, counting bicyclists, and estimating mode shares can all form the basis for powerful statistics that make the case for bicycling and walking. In many cases, MPOs are in the best position to help collect this data. However, such data are still scarce.

There is a complete lack of good data on bike-ped users. We had in most regions a formalized process for generating motorized data, but not non-motorized. ... Last year, we collected the first round of data in all ten counties – volume data, then who the users are – gender, helmet use, appropriate use, time of day, day of week, season, etc. This does not answer how many people are riding and walking – census data is the best bet for these data. We are only looking at specific locations – who they are, what they are doing, etc. (NY, NY)

One reason for the scarcity of data is the time and commitment needed to generate it.

Looking back (on our creating measurable goals in our bikeways plan), following up to see whether the goals were reached would take considerable before and after data, something that we were not equipped to do then or now. It sounded like a worthy goal and still does. But, what seemed important and a good idea back then, does not seem practical now. (Northwestern Indiana)

But some regions are embarking on ambitious data collection projects.

One of the most unique things we've done is the development of an accessibility model. ... It includes all streets, information about sidewalks, bike lanes, bike routes, and public transit. We do bike-ped counts for all signalized intersections over a cycle of three years. We have nearly 100



intersection counts – each leg. We'll build a baseline of heavy use – by collecting data at peak hours on weekdays. ... We are able to code impediments into the model prior to accessibility analysis. For example, we can code a school next to a facility with a high rate of crashes. This will result in a different level of accessibility. (Albuquerque, NM)

Puget Sound, WA and Chicago offer other good examples of collecting and employing especially useful data.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ENTITIES

A final, and perhaps most fundamental means of encouraging popular support is to obtain or maintain good working relationships with the local governments within an MPO's region. For example, 54% of our respondents reported that their MPO bike-ped plan had been endorsed or adopted by the local governments in their area. Many of the MPOs responded “no” to this question because they have no formal endorsement process. However, as local government officials appear to be on every MPO policy board, and have final authority for all MPO actions, de facto approval is likely occurring in many of the MPOs who answered “no”. We have cited throughout this paper many other examples of cooperation and

Puget Sound Transportation Panel Survey

“Perhaps the most ambitious data collection project is the Puget Sound Transportation Panel survey. In each survey year a household questionnaire and a two-day travel diary are administered to the same households, as well as each household members 15 years and older. In this way, at each contact, or wave, a database of households that participate at multiple time points is built up. ...

The Puget Sound Transportation Panel (PSTP) is a panel survey, the repeated observation of the same persons (or other units) over time.... The major goals of the PSTP have been to:

- Track changes in employment, work characteristics, household composition, and vehicle availability.
- Monitor changes in travel behavior and responses to changes in the transportation environment.
- Examine changes in attitudes and values of transit and non-transit users.

...

PSTP has averaged approximately 1700 household participants at each of the nine waves since 1989.” (Konstadinos G. Goulias, “Analysis of the Puget Sound Transportation Panel Survey Database: Waves 1-9 - Final Report”, submitted to: The Puget Sound Regional Council, June 30, 2003.)



coordination among MPOs and various local government entities in the numerous activities in which MPOs reported being engaged.

Although cooperation between the state DOTs and MPOs is important, few MPOs reported an effective relationship with their state DOTs. For example, most MPO representatives reported either that their regional bike-ped plan was not mentioned in the state DOT bike-ped plan, or that they did not know if it was. Given our finding in “Are We There Yet?” that almost half of all state DOTs do not either have a bike-ped plan or have no mention of bicycling and walking in their long range transportation plan, MPOs might do well to reinforce the need to do so, and offer their expertise toward this end. For their part, state DOTs need to consider the importance of MPOs in determining and meeting the needs of local governments.

So, MPOs interested in taking a lead in improving bicycling and walking seek, or take advantage of political support by

- encouraging community awareness of the benefits of bicycling and walking to health, safety, and other community concerns
- seeking the support of the general public through a public involvement process
- collecting and using objective data
- cultivating good relationships with local governments and the state DOT



¹ We did not address a related issue – publicizing the existence of bike-ped projects, and encouraging their use. We saw many fine examples of this. One worth noting is from the city of Philadelphia. It's brochure introducing The Philadelphia Bike Network begins with this: “What if we told you there was a vehicle that can carry ten times its weight in passenger and cargo, that's 100% non-polluting, can be repaired with a few simple tools, and can actually make its user healthier and smarter? There is. It's the bicycle. What if we told you there's a way to make every bicycle in the Philadelphia area safer and easier to use as private transportation for the general public? There is. It's the Philadelphia Bike Network.”

² To the contrary, it appears that increasing bike-ped facilities and therefore increasing the number of cyclists and pedestrians actually reduces the rate of injuries (P. L. Jacobsen, “Safety in numbers: more walkers and bicyclists, safer walking and bicycling”, *Injury Prevention* 2003, 9: 205-209).



Influencing transportation funding

ONE MEASURE OF THE SUCCESS OF MPOS IN IMPROVING bicycling and walking is money: how much they have been able to secure, and where it comes from. The second question is especially important because MPOs usually have direct control over only a small portion of the transportation funds that are programmed through their planning process. Local funds remain in the hands of the counties or cities that are members of the MPO. Nationwide, most federal transportation funds go to the state DOTs for disbursement, largely as the state DOTs see fit. MPOs that have expanded funding sources for bicycling and walking beyond the few categories traditionally used for this purpose are showing their commitment while bolstering their resources.

To get a sense of how bike-ped projects are currently funded, we asked MPOs to check which of the following federal programs they have used in the past three years to support these projects. Here is the summary of the portion of MPOs that reported using various funding programs in the past three years for bicycle-pedestrian projects.

CMAQ: 28%
 Enhancements: 90%
 Safety Set Asides: 6%
 Urbanized STP: 35%
 State STP: 15%
 NHS: 6%
 Other: 28%



It is not surprising that Enhancement (TE) funds are most widely used for bike-ped accommodations, as this funding category was created with this and related purposes in mind.¹ As further evidence of their popularity, data compiled by the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse showed that 90% of available TE funds have been programmed by states in State Transportation Improvement Programs (STIPs) over the past ten years.²



While TE funds are often administered at the state level, another funding category is more squarely in the hands of the MPOs: the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program. This program is intended to mitigate metropolitan air pollution problems, and is primarily used for transit. But a significant portion of MPOs has used these funds for non-polluting bicycle and pedestrian projects.

Another noteworthy point generated by these responses is the percentage of MPOs using Surface Transportation Project (STP) funds for bike-ped projects. STP funds are general-purpose funds that most often go to road-building, but ISTEA and TEA-21 clearly permit states to spend STP funds for bike-ped projects.³ In most cases, the state DOT decides how STP funds are spent. While our survey did not ask MPOs to specify who was in control of the spending decision on STP funds, other research has found a marked difference: when the decision over use of STP funds is “devolved” to the metropolitan level, it is more likely the money will go to non-traditional uses. A recent analysis of use of STP funds for transit projects found that less than three percent of STP funds are spent on transit when the state is making the funding decision. But when the funds are devolved or sub-allocated to the MPO, the regional decision-makers used more than 9 percent of the STP funds for transit.⁴

HOW THE MONEY FLOWS

It is clear from the survey that in order to secure funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects, MPO staff must know how money flows from Washington to the states, to the regions, and to local governments. MPOs also need to be aware of other potential sources of funds for the provision of bike-ped accommodations. And MPOs must understand how much money is currently being spent on bike-ped accommodations. If supporters of a multi-modal transportation system are to lobby for some appropriate – however defined – share of these funds, they need first to know what each mode is currently receiving.

Most MPO respondents during the interviews seem to have an understanding of the process by which money flows to bike-ped projects in their region. On the other hand,



we only rarely noted an awareness that the process through which money flows might be mutable: that state DOTs are given tremendous latitude in creating this process, and MPOs, local governments, and the public might effectively lobby to change the process to better serve regional transportation needs. This awareness appears most keenly in MPOs whose regions cover more than one state. They see firsthand the differences between states in how projects get funded.

NJDOT and PENNDOT are very different. NJDOT is much more top-down. We are more at their beck and call. PENNDOT has jurisdiction over a vastly larger road network. In New Jersey, the lower level roads are under the domain of each county. In Pennsylvania, by necessity, they need to devolve things to the regional level. In New Jersey, however, they can more efficiently manage from Trenton. (Delaware Valley, PA – NJ)

For Missouri, we have an advisory committee to review and score projects. The rankings then go to the technical committee, then to the MARC board, then to the state. Without exception, the state has gone with our recommendation. For Kansas, the applications are received by MARC then sent to KDOT. But our recommendations are really not followed. (Kansas City, MO)

How TE money flows is up to the governors of each state. Each governor does things differently. In State A, we can prioritize projects locally. Then the ranking goes to the state. In State A, our ranking is usually not regarded. In State A, TE funds have usually been spent on historical preservation. State B allocates a certain percentage of TE funds to various projects: 25% to historic preservation, 25% to bike-ped, 25% to beautification, etc. This is a far more equitable process. (Question: Have you ever tried to influence this process?) Yes. One of our policy committee members just spoke up about this. “Why should we bother prioritizing if there’s such a blatant disregard (for our decisions)?” (respondent requested anonymity for this quote)

WHAT OTHER MONEY FLOWS

Some MPOs have gone beyond federal funds to utilize other funding sources for bicycling and walking. The degree to which MPOs were responsible for discovering or advocating these alternatives is an open question. What is not is the degree to which



they and their regions have benefited. We suggest that MPOs become aware of these strategies, and stand ready to recommend them to public officials, community leaders, and the general public. Here are several examples:

Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) provides direct financial incentives for cities, counties, and community-based organizations to support community development and redevelopment projects that encourage pedestrian, transit, and/or bicycle trips, and spur the compact development of housing, downtowns and regional activity centers. ... TLC offers planning grants, capital grants, and housing incentive program grants. Over the past five years, the Metropolitan Planning Commission has programmed close to \$58 million from federal funds and allocated an additional \$1.7 million in state Transportation Development Act funds to TLC projects. (MTC, Oakland, CA)

System Development Charges (SDCs) are not unique to Eugene or Oregon. (Note: These are fees charged to developers or new residents for infrastructure services like sewer extensions, water extensions, parks, sidewalks and bike lanes.) In the late '80s, Eugene and Springfield updated their schedule to charging for new growth in the infrastructure. With respect to transportation, the question was how much to charge new developments for their fair share of the burden. Fortunately, they had an existing bike system – hundreds of miles of bike lanes and paths. They could figure out how much to charge new residents per capita for the development and maintenance of this system. (Lane Co, OR)

We have three main sources of funds. 1. Transportation Development Act, funded by a .25% sales tax for various transportation projects. We receive about \$2.5 million for bike-ped projects. 2. Local (city) transportation sales tax. We get \$1 million a year for bike projects.⁵ 3. Federal funds – TE plus CMAQ. (San Diego, CA)

We get funds from “Great Outdoors Colorado” grants. A portion of state lottery money goes to fund outdoor projects – parks, wildlife preservation, legacy, etc. (Mesa Co, CO):

We have a major greenway project. The TE funds to be used can be matched with other federal



funds. We're on a body of water run by the Army Corps of Engineers. They will provide matching funds for projects like this. (Kentuckiana, KY – IN)

A public-private partnership was engineered in Billings, MT. TE funds were matched by a private developer, in the form of cash and an easement , for a trail project.

A recent Brookings Institution study documents a gradual shift from paying for transportation improvements with user fees to paying with local sales and other taxes, such as cited in some of the above examples. The authors argue for a return to an emphasis on user fees for a number of sound reasons.⁶ While MPOs can, perhaps should, educate their regions on the efficacy of increasing their state fuel tax, tolls, and vehicle registration fees, we also suggest they become aware of and seek to utilize other funding sources that may be more readily available.

HOW MUCH MONEY FLOWS

The MPO staff that responded to our questionnaire and participated in our interview seemed overwhelmingly supportive of bicycling and walking as means of transportation and recreation. Yet very few of them appear able to discuss the costs and economic benefits of these transportation modes, let alone offer comparisons with other modes or discuss the relative merits of related spending programs. We found only ten MPOs⁷ who had calculated, with some degree of rigor, the percentage of transportation funds allocated to bike-ped accommodations, and only one of these – Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) that is also creating measures of mode share, bike-ped safety and related variables that can be used to assess the effects of this funding.

Here are examples of some who have a good understanding of how much money flows to bike-ped accommodations in their regions.

As part of our regional bike-ped plan, we tried to figure this out. There are a number of ways to approximate this. In our 2002-06 TIP, about \$55 million were programmed for bike-ped projects (excluding when bike-ped accommodations were part of larger projects). Plus we had CMAQ



funding. – not included that programmed for subsequent years. Plus we had Department of Natural Resources funding of about \$5.3 million a year. Plus we had IDOT routine accommodations – about \$3.7 million for things like sidewalks. This is above what we spend on standalone projects. Overall, in 2000 about \$12.1 million was spent in federal and state funds for bike-ped programs – about \$242 million over the life of our 20-year plan. This is roughly in line with \$225 million we expected to be available from TE and CMAQ funds over the life of the plan. Over the past several years we had a \$2 billion program. So, we spent less than 1% in standalone bike-ped projects. (Chicago, IL)

Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) is MPO for the Clark County region in Washington State. From 1998 to 2002, the region received \$51.35 million in federal transportation revenues that the MPO has control over allocation; \$19.84 million in STP funds, \$11.09 in CMAQ funds and \$20.42 million in Section 5307 (transit) funds. Of this total, 50% was spent on transit, 31% on road capacity (that also includes provision of bicycle, pedestrian and transit improvements to meet local street design standards), 9% on ITS, 8% on bicycle and pedestrian projects and 2% on planning studies.

From 1992-2005, approximately \$637 million in regional flexible funds (CMAQ/STP) was spent on transportation projects in this region. Of this amount, approximately \$43 million was spent on stand-alone bike and/or pedestrian projects. This represents 7% of the total regional flexible funds spent in the region and does not include maintenance/preservations projects and other road and bridge modernization projects that were funded through a state bonding program (Oregon Transportation Investment Act I and II). (Portland, OR)

Many MPO representatives, including those cited above, described the difficulty in arriving at this estimate. The problems of teasing out the cost of bike-ped elements within larger highway projects were repeatedly mentioned. Yet to become equal partners in a multimodal system requires bicycling and walking to undergo the same objective analysis that is, or should be, directed at cars and transit.

¹ “A recent report found that 55 percent of federal TE funds are spent on bicycle, pedestrian and rails-trails projects, 24 percent on historic preservation and tourist centers, and 21 percent on landscaping, beautification and environmental mitigation.” Cited in Robert Puentes and Linda Bailey, “Improving Metropolitan Decision Making in Transportation: Greater Funding and Devolution for Greater Accountability”, The Brookings Institution Series on Transportation Reform, October, 2003, p. 8.



Effective support of spending:
A recent national battle over continued funding of the Transportation Enhancements Program, one of the main sources of funding for bike-ped projects, was decided in part by data.

In a letter to the House Appropriations Committee, Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) used statistics to make his case:

“...Nationally there are over 1 million daily commuters and nearly 57 million people who report regular bicycling activities. According to a recent poll, over half of Americans want to bike more than they do now. Currently, less than one percent of all transportation funds spent each year are directed toward bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Yet bicycling and walking account for at least 7 percent of trips and 13.3 percent of traffic fatalities.”
(Letter from Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) to the leadership of the House Appropriations Committee July 23, 2003; emphasis added)

² See www.enhancements.org

³ Under TE frequently asked questions (www.fhwa.dot.gov): “Can States sub-allocate their Surface Transportation Program (STP) transportation enhancement (TE) funds to the MPOs? Is this action contrary to the prohibition of sub-allocation in the planning regulations? STP TE funds may be sub-allocated to MPOs. Neither the TE Guidance nor the planning regulations prohibit the sub-allocation of transportation enhancement funds by the State.”

⁴ Robert Puentes and Linda Bailey, “Improving Metropolitan Decision Making in Transportation: Greater Funding Devolution for Greater Accountability”, op.cit.

⁵ The San Diego respondent subsequently added: “The program total for all uses this year will be about \$210 million. I guess \$1 million seemed like a good number back in 1987 when the program was passed by the voters, but it doesn’t any more. The program is due to expire in 2008, so we’re going back to the voters for a 30-year extension. It’s too soon to know what the bike-ped amount will be in the new program, but it certainly will be a percentage and not a flat amount.”

⁶ “User fees continue to be among the most effective, efficient, and equitable approach to transportation finance. In the short term, fuel taxes are the most readily available user fees, and states should raise fuel taxes to support transportation programs rather than devolve funding responsibility to local governments through local tax measures.” Martin Wachs, “Improving Efficiency and Equity in Transportation Finance”, The Brookings Institution Series on Transportation Reform, April, 2003, p.15.

⁷ Of the 46 MPOs from whom we recorded an answer to this question, the nine who had already given it some study are: Bakersfield (CA), Buffalo (NY), Chicago (IL), Chittenden Co (VT), Lane Co (OR), Lee Co (FL), Portland (OR), Rhode Island, Southwest Washington, and Twin Cities (MN).



Creating meaningful policies and practices: Institutionalization

CREATING PLANS IS GOOD. CREATING PLANS THAT WILL likely yield results is better. Creating practices that incorporate plan goals into daily activities is better still. Practices force change by making it routine. Some MPOs have succeeded in institutionalizing better policies for bicycling and walking. For example:

Lane Co, OR TransPlan July 2002: Bicycle Policy #2: Bikeways on Arterials and Collectors

Require bikeways along new and reconstructed arterial and major collector streets.

TSI Bicycle Policy #3: Bikeway Connections to New Development

Require bikeways to connect new development with nearby neighborhood activity centers and major destinations.

Knoxville, TN: Appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities shall be established in new construction and reconstruction projects in all urbanized areas unless one or more of three conditions are met:

- Bicyclists and pedestrians are prohibited by law from using the roadway. In this instance, a greater effort may be necessary to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians elsewhere within the right-of-way or within the same transportation corridor.
- The cost of establishing bikeways or walkways would be excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use. Excessively disproportionate is defined as exceeding twenty percent of the cost of the larger transportation project.
- Sparsity of population or other factors indicate an absence of need.

Our policy is to include bike lanes on all new roads – marked lanes. Bakersfield passed a city ordinance requiring bike lanes on all repaving projects. (Bakersfield, CA)

Local governments now have design standards for urban streets. They include bike lanes and sidewalks in all projects. (SW Washington)

The San Diego City manual is a model for us. All Streets above collectors will now have bike lanes.¹
(San Diego, CA)



Other MPOs are taking perhaps tentative steps toward institutionalizing policies like these into practices.

One of our biggest achievements is to get the local PennDOT office to retain an engineering consultant to review every resurfacing project to determine if bike lanes can be included. If yes, the consultant does the design work. (Delaware Valley, PA – NJ)

Our DOT invited me to help them re-write their pre-construction manual, to specifically focus on non-motorized transportation. ... Also, I work closely with each community to begin to incorporate non-motorized transportation into their city plans. We have come a long way. (Mountainland, UT)

In our last project solicitation, every road project we funded had a bikeway. ... Local governments submit projects with bike-ped elements because they know they'll be unsuccessful without them. (Twin Cities, MN)

The fact that the city has strengthened the ordinance for sidewalk requirements is important. So is the fact that they have dramatically increased local funding for sidewalk construction. They have built more miles of sidewalks in the last three years as in the previous 15 years. (Greensboro, NC)

The implementation of practices like these is a key outcome of advocacy efforts – whether advocates are citizen groups or government agencies. As one MPO reiterated,

It is easy to confuse long-range plan policies with actual institutionalization. ... (Policies will) remain just policies unless followed through with actual ordinances or changes in procedures in the transportation improvement delivery process. (Delaware Valley, PA-NJ)

Practices will not increase bike mode share or reduce pedestrian injuries. But they can make routine the creation of bike and ped facilities that produce these results.



Conclusion

The majority of MPOs we interviewed are doing the basics well, regarding bike-ped accommodations¹. They have assigned staff to bike-ped issues, allocated time, created plans, gained the cooperation of local governments, and pursued funding.

Some of these MPOs are excelling at meeting some of their more difficult challenges. They have a clear vision and a commitment to bicycling and walking. They have created plans likely to yield results. They have generated political and public support for bike-ped accommodations. They understand how funds flow and have taken an active role in finding and using these funds for regional projects. They have supported (perhaps initiated) the creation of Practices that make bike-ped accommodations routine.

Rather than concluding by citing postulates of irrevocable truth established from our organization's collective wisdom, and leaving MPOs with a manual coyly titled "The Seven Pillars of Successful MPOs", or something similar, we have offered as lessons real examples from real MPOs striving to do well. All of our respondents would quickly state the difficulties they face in creating social change – for that is what they are doing. But all have lessons from which others can learn. We invite MPO staff and members, state DOTs, advocates, and the general public to learn from these lessons, apply them in their own regions, and share with others what they have learned in the process. There is no formula for success here. There is only the application of effort and the lessons taught by experience – yours and others.



In the first phase of our review of state DOTs, we asked: "Are We There Yet?" Are we at a place where bicycling and walking are treated as legitimate modes of transportation, equal in importance to the others? Based on the reports of the state DOT bike-ped coordinators, we are not there yet, although several states have made tremendous progress. Based on our survey of MPOs, we must conclude again that we are not there yet,

taking steps:



although several MPOs have made considerable headway. In future studies, we plan to explore the progress made by local governments toward making bike-ped accommodations routine. We will also return to the state DOTs and MPOs to assess their continuing efforts. We may not be there yet, but many organizations and individuals are pushing us closer.

Keep in mind, however, that we handpicked the MPOs we interviewed. We reiterate a concern that nearly half of all surveyed MPOs report spending fewer than five hours per week on bike-ped issues, while an additional 200 MPOs failed to even respond to our survey.

★ NATIONAL CENTER ★
for
BICYCLING & WALKING

www.bikewalk.org
1506 21st St. NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036