

25: Low-Traffic Suburban Routes

To increase cycling among suburban residents, well-marked low-traffic bicycle networks must be developed. Even among current cyclists, many suburban riders develop their own circuitous neighborhood routes. A formalized network will creatively identify existing routes and mark them with high-visibility treatments.

SITUATION

- High speed routes have bike lanes
- Few designated low-traffic suburban bike routes
- Cyclists create personalized informal networks

In 1971 the Oregon legislature passed the Bike Bill, mandating that all new and rebuilt roads have accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians. This landmark bill has resulted in a set of connected bike routes on high-traffic roads, roads that have been expanded to accommodate high-levels of auto volumes.



The BTA has conducted surveys of existing cyclists and have consistently found that cyclists are seeking new, more pleasant low-traffic bicycle routes. To accommodate this, many communities have been building up their off-street multiuse trail systems. Also, individuals are reportedly creating their individualized low-traffic routes to that take them to workplaces and other destinations. These routes often take months to design, they are not marked, nor are they known by other cyclists or planning staff.

PROBLEMS

- Current network is not suitable for many cyclists
- Poor overall connectivity of low-traffic routes
- Major streets create a barrier

The current system of bicycle routes on major arterials is suitable for commuters and advanced cyclists, but fails to meet the needs of many people that are interested in cycling, for children, seniors, and others that just want to ride infrequently. The concerns are based on perceptions – many novice cyclists perceive the busy streets as just too dangerous to ride on – and statistical reality – data analysis has shown the low-traffic streets are safer for bicyclists than high-traffic, high-speed routes.

Most suburban communities lack an existing network of low-traffic bicycle boulevards; for those seeking to develop a new network of routes, many communities are hampered by poor connectivity of their low-traffic suburban streets networks. Furthermore, many

suburban areas have a large number of very large arterials streets that would pose significant barriers for the development of new low-traffic bike routes.

SOLUTIONS

- Creation of new bike boulevards
- Mark existing routes used by individuals
- Connect with desired destinations and existing routes
- Signage for cyclists

Creating a new set of low-traffic bicycle boulevards would require innovation and documentation. Communities could begin by working with the BTA and existing cyclists to identify the set of low-traffic routes that are currently popular by not marked or signed as boulevards. These routes can be enhanced and elevated to official bicycle boulevards. See white paper #29 Low-Speeds/Low-Volume Bikeways for more specific ideas on creating new boulevard solutions.

In addition to communities should identify of innovative potential routes and seek to put them into planning documents. These would connect to town centers, schools, parks, transit, and other bicycle routes.

New routes would require a set of unique tools for each community that might include punching through cul-de-sacs and other public land areas to create bicycle and pedestrian through access. The BTA is willing to work with communities to support planning and implementation of new route concepts.



WHO TO CONTACT

For information on whom to contact in your community call the BTA.

BTA Liaison

Scott Bricker, Policy Director
(503) 226 – 0676 x 14