

29: Low-Speeds/Low-Volume Bikeways

Portland's Bicycle Boulevards and European Woonerfs are successful street treatments that reduce speeds in residential neighborhoods and provide cyclists with excellent cross-town routes. Building more of these facilities will be a cost-effective way to attract new riders.

SITUATION

- 30 miles of Bicycle Boulevards in Portland
- Boulevards are well-used
- High safety record
- Surveys show people prefer low-traffic routes

Bicycling in Portland has increased by over 300% in the last 15 years. Many of these cyclists use the 30 miles of Portland's Bicycle Boulevards, mainly in SE Portland. Bicycle Boulevards are low-traffic routes with comfortable, convenient, and safe conditions.

In two separate surveys conducted by the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, with over 2,250 respondents, traffic speeds and volumes was the primary concern of current confident and expert cyclists. The data also concluded the bicyclists' favorite streets were low-traffic or non-automobile traffic routes.



The City of Portland has conducted a series of crash evaluations and showed that low-traffic bicycle have fewer serve crashes that nearby busier routes; the crash rates are even lower on the Bicycle Boulevards (because there are more bicyclists.) Boulevards are also a place where new bikers learn to be comfortable riding around the city.

PROBLEMS

- Few new routes have been developed in the last ten years
- Limited suburban routes
- Routes have problematic crossings of busy streets
- Routes are not clearly identified

While Bicycle Boulevards are popular among cyclists, very few new routes have been developed in the last decade. Most of the routes are in inner SE Portland, therefore North, Northeast, and the west side of Portland lack a comprehensive network of these routes.

Portland has the majority of the region's Boulevards. Many suburban communities lack these routes, however each suburban community has a set of barriers to developing these routes. (See BTA White Paper #25 for more information.)

Bicycle Boulevards face other barriers. These low-traffic routes cross busy streets, many of these have inadequate crossing treatments. These busy intersections are barriers for many interested and inexperienced cyclists. Finally, routes often go unrecognized because they are not well identified with large street stencils.

SOLUTIONS

- Extend and expand low-traffic routes
- Use cost-effective solutions
- Expansion European treatments are available
- Provide safe crossing of busy streets
- Make visible with large stencils and signs

Extending and expanding the number of low-traffic Bicycle Boulevard streets would increase the number of safe and comfortable bicycle routes. Boulevards that provide ideal conditions for bicycles would not come with a high price tag.



Simple solutions that slow automobiles and reduce volumes would then allow stop signs to be rotated and optimized for bikes. Many communities used traffic diversion or cul-de-sacs to achieve this goal. More elaborate methods include speed bumps, curb extensions, chicanes (mid block sidewalk extensions), and traffic circles. European Woonerf treatments slow auto speeds down even further and are employed throughout an entire neighborhood.

Bicycle boulevards must ensure safe crossing of major streets. Low cost measures include median islands, more expensive options are new traffic signals and bike-only traffic signals.

Routes must also be well-marked with signage and pavement markings. Large pavement markings will increase visibility and awareness by both motorists and cyclists. Routes markings must indicate clearly when a route turns.

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