

Bikeability Checklist

How bikeable is your community?

Riding a bike is fun!

Bicycling is a great way to get around and to get your daily dose of physical activity. It's good for the environment, and it can save you money. No wonder many communities are encouraging people to ride their bikes more often!



Can you get to where you want to go by bike?

Some communities are more bikeable than others: how does yours rate? Read over the questions in this checklist and then take a ride in your community, perhaps to the local shops, to visit a friend, or even to work. See if you can get where you want to go by bicycle, even if you are just riding around the neighborhood to get some exercise.



At the end of your ride, answer each question and, based on your opinion, circle an overall rating for each question. You can also note any problems you encountered by checking the appropriate box(es). Be sure to make a careful note of any specific locations that need improvement.



Add up the numbers to see how you rated your ride. Then, turn to the pages that show you how to begin to improve those areas where you gave your community a low score.

Before you ride, make sure your bike is in good working order, put on a helmet, and be sure you can manage the ride or route you've chosen. Enjoy the ride!

Go for a ride and use this checklist to rate your neighborhood's bikeability.



How bikeable is your community?

Location of bike ride (be specific): _____

Rating Scale:



1. Did you have a place to bicycle safely?

a) On the road, sharing the road with motor vehicles?

- Yes Some problems (please note locations):
- No space for bicyclists to ride
 - Bicycle lane or paved shoulder disappeared
 - Heavy and/or fast-moving traffic
 - Too many trucks or buses
 - No space for bicyclists on bridges or in tunnels
 - Poorly lighted roadways
- Other problems: _____

b) On an off-road path or trail, where motor vehicles were not allowed?

- Yes Some problems:
- Path ended abruptly
 - Path didn't go where I wanted to go
 - Path intersected with roads that were difficult to cross
 - Path was crowded
 - Path was unsafe because of sharp turns or dangerous downhill
 - Path was uncomfortable because of too many hills
 - Path was poorly lighted
- Other problems: _____

Overall "Safe Place To Ride" Rating: (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. How was the surface that you rode on?

- Good Some problems, the road or path had:
- Potholes
 - Cracked or broken pavement
 - Debris (e.g. broken glass, sand, gravel, etc.)
 - Dangerous drain grates, utility covers, or metal plates
 - Uneven surface or gaps
 - Slippery surfaces when wet (e.g. bridge decks, construction plates, road markings)
 - Bumpy or angled railroad tracks
 - Rumble strips
- Other problems: _____

Overall Surface Rating: (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6

3. How were the intersections you rode through?

- Good Some problems:
- Had to wait too long to cross intersection
 - Couldn't see crossing traffic
 - Signal didn't give me enough time to cross the road
 - Signal didn't change for a bicycle
 - Unsure where or how to ride through intersection
- Other problems: _____

Overall Intersection Rating: (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Continue the checklist on the next page...

4. Did drivers behave well?

- Yes Some problems, drivers:
- Drove too fast
 - Passed me too close
 - Did not signal
 - Harassed me
 - Cut me off
 - Ran red lights or stop sign
- Other problems: _____

Overall Driver Rating: (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6

5. Was it easy for you to use your bike?

- Yes Some problems:
- No maps, signs, or road markings to help me find my way
 - No safe or secure place to leave my bicycle at my destination
 - No way to take my bicycle with me on the bus or train
 - Scary dogs
 - Hard to find a direct route I liked
 - Route was too hilly
- Other problems: _____

Overall Ease of Use Rating: (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6

6. What did you do to make your ride safer?

Your behavior contributes to the bikeability of your community. Check all that apply:

- Wore a bicycle helmet
- Obeyed traffic signal and signs
- Rode in a straight line (didn't weave)
- Signaled my turns
- Rode with (not against) traffic
- Used lights, if riding at night
- Wore reflective and/or retroreflective materials and bright clothing
- Was courteous to other travelers (motorist, skaters, pedestrians, etc.)

7. Tell us a little about yourself.

In good weather months, about how many days a month do you ride your bike?

- Never
- Occasionally (one or two)
- Frequently (5-10)
- Most (more than 15)
- Every day

Which of these phrases best describes you?

- An advanced, confident rider who is comfortable riding in most traffic situations
- An intermediate rider who is not really comfortable riding in most traffic situations
- A beginner rider who prefers to stick to the bike path or trail

How does your community rate? Add up your ratings and decide.

(Questions 6 and 7 do not contribute to your community's score)

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|--|
| 1. _____ | 26-30 | Celebrate! You live in a bicycle-friendly community. |
| 2. _____ | 21-25 | Your community is pretty good, but there's always room for improvement. |
| 3. _____ | 16-20 | Conditions for riding are okay, but not ideal. Plenty of opportunity for improvements. |
| 4. _____ | 11-15 | Conditions are poor and you deserve better than this! Call the mayor and the newspaper right away. |
| 5. _____ | 5-10 | Oh dear. Consider wearing body armor and Christmas tree lights before venturing out again. |
| Total _____ | | |

Did you find something that needs to be changed?

On the next page, you'll find suggestions for improving the bikeability of your community based on the problems you identified. Take a look at both the short- and long-term solutions and commit to seeing at least one of each through to the end. If you don't, then who will?

During your bike ride, how did you feel physically? Could you go as far or as fast as you wanted to? Were you short of breath, tired, or were your muscles sore? The next page also has some suggestions to improve the enjoyment of your ride.

Bicycling, whether for transportation or recreation, is a great way to get 30 minutes of physical activity into your day. Riding, just like any other activity, should be something you enjoy doing. The more you enjoy it, the more likely you'll stick with it. Choose routes that match your skill level and physical activities. If a route is too long or hilly, find a new one. Start slowly and work up to your potential.

Now that you know the problems,
you can find the answers.

Improving your community's score...



1. Did you have a place to bicycle safely?

a) On the road?

No space for bicyclists to ride (e.g. no bike lane or shoulder; narrow lanes)
Bicycle lane or paved shoulder disappeared
Heavy and/or fast-moving traffic
Too many trucks or buses
No space for bicyclists on bridges or in tunnels
Poorly lighted roadways

What you can do immediately

- pick another route for now
- tell local transportation engineers or public works department about specific problems; provide a copy of your checklist
- find a class to boost your confidence about riding in traffic

What you and your community can do with more time

- participate in local planning meetings
- encourage your community to adopt a plan to improve conditions, including a network of bike lanes on major roads
- ask your public works department to consider "Share the Road" signs at specific locations
- ask your state department of transportation to include paved shoulders on all their rural highways
- establish or join a local bicycle advocacy group

b) On an off-road path or trail?

Path ended abruptly
Path didn't go where I wanted to go
Path intersected with roads that were difficult to cross
Path was crowded
Path was unsafe because of sharp turns or dangerous downhill
Path was uncomfortable because of too many hills
Path was poorly lighted

- slow down and take care when using the path
- find an on-street route
- use the path at less crowded times
- tell the trail manager or agency about specific problems

- ask the trail manager or agency to improve directional and warning signs
- petition your local transportation agency to improve path/roadway crossings
- ask for more trails in your community
- establish or join a "Friends of the Trail" advocacy group

2. How was the surface you rode on?

Potholes
Cracked or broken pavement
Debris (e.g. broken glass, sand, gravel, etc.)
Dangerous drain grates, utility covers, or metal plates
Uneven surface or gaps
Slippery surfaces when wet (e.g. bridge decks, construction plates, road markings)
Bumpy or angled railroad tracks
Rumble strips

- report problems immediately to public works department or appropriate agency
- keep your eye on the road/path
- pick another route until the problem is fixed (and check to see that the problems are fixed)
- organize a community effort to clean up the path

- work with your public works and parks department to develop a pothole or hazard report card or online link to warn the agency of potential hazards
- ask your public works department to gradually replace all dangerous drainage grates with more bicycle-friendly designs, and improve railroad crossings so cyclists can cross them at 90 degrees
- petition your state DOT to adopt a bicycle-friendly rumble-strip policy

3. How were the intersections you rode through?

Had to wait too long to cross intersection
Couldn't see crossing traffic
Signal didn't give me enough time to cross the road
The signal didn't change for a bicycle
Unsure where or how to ride through intersection

- pick another route for now
- tell local transportation engineers or public works department about specific problems
- take a class to improve your riding confidence and skills

- ask the public works department to look at the timing of the specific traffic signals
- ask the public works department to install loop-detectors that detect bicyclists
- suggest improvements to sightlines that include cutting back vegetation; building out the path crossing; and moving parked cars that obstruct your view
- organize community-wide, on-bike training on how to safely ride through intersections

Improving your community's score...

(continued)

What you can do immediately

What you and your community can do with more time

4. Did drivers behave well?

Drivers:
Drove too fast
Passed me too close
Did not signal
Harassed me
Cut me off
Ran red lights or stop signs

- report unsafe drivers to the police
- set an example by riding responsibly; obey traffic laws; don't antagonize drivers
- always expect the unexpected
- work with your community to raise awareness to share the road

- ask the police department to enforce speed limits and safe driving
- encourage your department of motor vehicles to include "Share the Road" messages in driver tests and correspondence with drivers
- ask city planners and traffic engineers for traffic calming ideas
- encourage your community to use cameras to catch speeders and red light runners

5. Was it easy for you to use your bike?

No maps, signs, or road markings to help me find my way
No safe or secure place to leave my bicycle at my destination
No way to take my bicycle with me on the bus or train
Scary dogs
Hard to find a direct route I liked
Route was too hilly

- plan your route ahead of time
- find somewhere close by to lock your bike; never leave it unlocked
- report scary dogs to the animal control department
- learn to use all of your gears!

- ask your community to publish a local bike map
- ask your public works department to install bike parking racks at key destinations; work with them to identify locations
- petition your transit agency to install bike racks on all their buses
- plan your local route network to minimize the impact of steep hills
- establish or join a bicycle user group (BUG) at your workplace

6. What did you do to make your ride safer?

Wore a bicycle helmet
Obeyed traffic signals and signs
Rode in a straight line (didn't weave)
Signaled my turns
Rode with (not against) traffic
Used lights, if riding at night
Wore reflective materials and bright clothing
Was courteous to other travelers (motorists, skaters, pedestrians, etc.)

- go to your local bike shop and buy a helmet; get lights and reflectors if you are expecting to ride at night
- always follow the rules of the road and set a good example
- take a class to improve your riding skills and knowledge

- ask the police to enforce bicycle laws
- encourage your school or youth agencies to teach bicycle safety (on-bike)
- start or join a local bicycle club
- become a bicycle safety instructor



Need some guidance?
These resources might help...

Great Resources

STREET DESIGN AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
444 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 249
Washington, DC 20001
Tel: (202) 624-5800
www.aashto.org

Institute of Transportation Engineers
1099 14th Street, NW, Suite 300 West
Washington, DC 20005-3438
Tel: (202) 289-0222
www.ite.org

Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP)
P.O. Box 23576
Washington, DC 20026
Tel: (202) 366-4071
www.apbp.org

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC)
UNC Highway Safety Research Center
730 Airport Road, Suite 300
Campus Box 3430
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3430
Tel: (919) 962-2202
www.pedbikeinfo.org
www.bicyclinginfo.org

Federal Highway Administration
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590
www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/index.htm

EDUCATION AND SAFETY

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20590
Tel: (202) 366-1739
www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/

League of American Bicyclists
1612 K Street NW, Suite 401
Washington, DC 20006
Tel: (202) 822-1333
www.bikeleague.org

National Bicycle Safety Network
www.cdc.gov/ncipc/bike/default.htm

National Safe Kids Campaign
1301 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20004
Tel: (202) 662-0600
www.safekids.org

PATHS AND TRAILS

Rails to Trails Conservancy
1100 17th Street SW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 331-9696
www.railtrails.org

National Park Service
Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
1849 C Street, NW, MS-3622
Washington, DC 20240
www.nrc.nps.gov/rtca/rtca-ofh.htm

HEALTH

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity
4770 Buford Highway, NE
Atlanta, GA 30341-3724
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa
Tel: (770) 488-5692

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Childhood Injury Prevention
4770 Buford Highway, NE
Atlanta, GA 30341
www.cdc.gov/ncipc

ADVOCACY AND USER GROUPS

Thunderhead Alliance
1612 K Street, NW, Suite 401
Washington, DC 20006
Tel: (202) 822-1333
www.thunderheadalliance.org

League of American Bicyclists
1612 K Street, NW, Suite 401
Washington, DC 20006
Tel: (202) 822-1333
www.bikeleague.org

National Center for Bicycling and Walking
1506 21st Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 463-6622
www.bikewalk.org

Surface Transportation Policy Project
1100 17th Street, NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 466-2636
www.transact.org

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

Bikes and transit: www.bikemap.com

Bicycle information: www.bicyclinginfo.org

Bicycle-related research:
www.tfhr.gov/safety/pedbike/pedbike.htm

Bicycling Magazine: www.bicycling.com/

Bicycle touring:
Adventure Cycling Association
P.O. Box 8308
Missoula, MT 59807
(800) 755-2453
(406) 721-8754
www.adv-cycling.org