

# Bike Friendly Community Assessment

FOR  
TEENS

## How bikeable is your community?

### Riding a bike is fun!

It's 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 bicycles more often!

Take a ride with friends or family and decide for yourselves if your neighborhood is a friendly place to ride. If you find problems, see some suggestions of what you can do to make things better.

### Get Started:

First, read over the questions in this tool. Second, take a ride, perhaps to a local shop, to visit a friend, or even to school, after-school activities, or work. (Before you ride, make sure your bike is in good working order, put on a helmet, and be sure you can manage the ride.) See if you can get where you want to go by bike. You may choose to walk the route, but imagine how the conditions would be for you if you were riding a bike.

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.

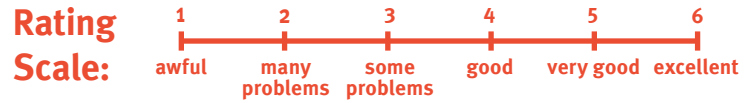


U.S. Department of Transportation  
**National Highway Traffic Safety  
Administration**

★★★★★  
**NHTSA**  
www.nhtsa.gov

# How bikeable is your community?

If you find problems, write the specific location(s) on the form.



## 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:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- No intersection  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Overall Intersection Rating: (circle one)**  
1 2 3 4 5 6

Continue the bike assessment 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:

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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:

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Overall Intersection 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 (motorists, 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 but 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)

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

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

#### 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.

# Improve your community's score

## What you and friends or family can do immediately

## What you and your community can do with more time

### 1. Did you have a place to bicycle safely?

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#### 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

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

- 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
- discuss with friends and family areas to avoid when bicycling and agree on safe routes
- ask neighbors to keep dogs leashed or fenced
- report scary dogs to the animal control department
- report scary people to the police
- report lighting needs to the police or appropriate public works department

- 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?

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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

- 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

Continued on the next page...

## What you and friends or family can do immediately

## What you and your community can do with more time

### 3. How were the intersections you rode through?

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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

### 4. Did drivers behave well?

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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
- be a **"roll model"** by setting a good example: ride responsibly and obey all traffic laws
- ask parents and drivers you know to be **"Roll Models"** and set a good example: drive safely and respectfully around all road users, slow down, and stay focused on the road
- 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 around bicyclists
- 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; cameras are effective in changing driving behaviors most likely to cause or impact the severity of a crash and associated injuries

### 5. Was it easy for you to use your bicycle?

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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 school or workplace

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

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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
- ask service organizations to help sponsor a cycling skills clinic for youth, teens, parents, etc.



Need some guidance? These resources might help...

# Great Resources

## BICYCLING INFORMATION

### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC)**

UNC Highway Safety Research Center  
Chapel Hill, NC  
<http://www.pedbikeinfo.org>  
<http://www.bikinginfo.org>

### **National Center for Safe Routes to School (NCSRTS)**

UNC Highway Safety Research Center  
Chapel Hill, NC  
<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org>

## STREET DESIGN AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

### **American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)**

Washington, DC  
<http://www.aashto.org>

### **Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)**

Washington, DC  
<http://www.ite.org>

### **Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP)**

Cedarburg, WI  
<http://www.apbp.org>

## FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION (FHWA)

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Program**

Office of Natural and Human Environment  
Washington, DC  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/index.htm>

## PATHS AND TRAILS

### **Rails to Trails Conservancy**

Washington, DC  
<http://www.railtrails.org>

### **National Park Service (NPS)**

Washington, DC  
<http://www.nps.gov/index.htm>

## EDUCATION AND SAFETY

### **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)**

Bicycle Safety Program, Office of Safety Programs  
Washington, DC  
<http://www.nhtsa.gov/Bicycles>

### **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)**

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Team, Office of Safety  
Washington, DC  
[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/)

SafeKids USA

Washington, DC  
<http://www.safekids.org>

## HEALTH

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity  
Atlanta, GA  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa>

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

Childhood Injury Prevention  
Atlanta, GA  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc>

## ADVOCACY

### **Alliance for Biking and Walking**

<http://www.peoplepoweredmovement.org>

### **League of American Bicyclists (LAB)**

<http://www.bikeleague.org>

### **National Center for Bicycling and Walking (NCBW)**

<http://www.bikewalk.org>

## FUNDING SOURCES

### **Transportation Enhancement Activities:**

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/>

### **Safe Routes to School Program:**

<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/>

### **Recreational Trails Program:**

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/>

### **National Scenic Byways Program:**

<http://www.bywaysonline.org/>

### **Federal Lands Highway Program:**

<http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/>