

## #9 – Establishing Bike Lanes — Chicago's Streets for Cycling Plan

### CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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### Background

In 1992, Mayor Richard M. Daley's Bicycle Advisory Council adopted Chicago's *Bike 2000 Plan*. A key recommendation was to "develop a network of a minimum of 300 miles of bikeways" including on-street bike lanes, signed routes, wide curb lanes, and bike paths. This case study will focus on how 100 miles of bike lanes have been established as of October 2004 in Chicago, presenting seven strategies to help other jurisdictions successfully establish bike lanes.

### Countermeasures



Bike lane next to parking. Chicago's Bike Lane Design Guide provides designs for various cross-sections.

#### 1) Planning

Chicago's first bike lanes were established in the mid 1990s with minimal public and political consultation and without a comprehensive plan. Some locations were criticized. Chicago's Bicycle Program Coordinator, soon after he was hired, secured \$125,000 to hire a professional consultant to prepare a plan identifying the best streets for bicycling in Chicago. This *Streets for Cycling Plan* identified a network of 150 miles of bike lanes and 300 miles of signed routes. Critical success factors include the following:

- Proposed bikeways were ♦field tested♦ by bicycle to ensure the best streets were selected.
- All streets proposed for bike lanes were measured to ensure they were wide enough for bike lanes with minimal effect on traffic movements. Bike lanes were primarily accommodated on streets by reducing travel and parking lane widths.
- Only streets with traffic controls at all major intersections were considered, to provide safe crossings for cyclists.

#### 2) Promotion

Preparation of the *Streets for Cycling Plan* was very inclusive, involving thousands of cyclists, presentations to thirty-five Chicago Aldermen and twenty-five senior CDOT staff, and even front-page coverage in the Chicago Tribune. The process was dynamic and widely known, with a result that the plan was largely supported upon its completion.

#### 3) Funding

Any plan is only as good as its implementation. Funding is critical.

Fortunately, perhaps in part because of the "buzz" while developing the *Streets for Cycling Plan*, the City of Chicago was able to secure \$3.825 million of federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds for implementation.

#### 4) Staff

With the federal funding, Chicago was able to hire three full-time consultants to help with establishing the network of bicycle lanes: an urban planner to arrange political and community support, a designer to prepare pavement marking plans, and a “bikeway technician” to perform detailed site visits and coordinate construction. In addition, two student interns were hired to work with the program and assist as needed. The designer and bikeway technician were Chicagoland Bicycle Federation employees who were passionate about improving conditions for cycling. The Chicagoland Bicycle Federation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the bicycling environment of the region.



More than 1 million copies of the Chicago Bike Map have been published.



### 5) Map

More than one million copies of a map featuring the *Streets for Cycling Plan* were published. The *Chicago Sun-Times*, at no cost to the city, publishes the map every year as an insert in its Sunday edition following Bike to Work Day in June. Copies were also distributed throughout the Chicago Transportation and Planning Departments. Laminated (display) maps were mailed to 100 local engineering and planning firms with a letter from the transportation department's commissioner asking them to consider the recommended routes in their projects.

### 6) Resurfacing Programs

Every year in Chicago more than 50 to 75 miles of roads with poor pavement are resurfaced. Each year, thanks to the bikeway technician's efforts in reviewing the bicycle network included in this program, five to 10 miles of new or upgraded bike lanes are established during resurfacing. Advantages include costs being absorbed by the resurfacing agency and excellent (vs. potholed) pavement for bicycling. Ribbon-cutting ceremonies are often staged, and letters are written to acknowledge the efforts of the resurfacing agency to help ensure their continued support.

Additionally, Chicago streets are frequently repaved after utility or construction work (e.g., sewer main repair, fiber optic cable installation). Bikeway technicians arrange for new lanes to be striped or existing lanes upgraded as a condition of approval for this work.

### 7) Engineering Outreach

A plan will only be implemented if engineers and planners embrace it. Education and outreach are especially important since most agencies and their staff have little experience planning and designing for bike lanes. Two Chicago strategies:

- Staging three *Bicycle Facility Tours* a year for engineers and planners to see that bike lanes work. Are they worth staging? Consider what one participant stated: "I'm going to include bike lanes in my project now that I see that they work. Thanks for getting me on a bike for the first time in years."
- Developing comprehensive design guidelines with typical cross-sections, intersection configurations, and specifications for line types and bicycle symbols. Guidelines are compiled in the *Bike Lane Design Guide* and distributed for engineers' reference. Plans are under way to follow-up these guidelines with a 2-hour interactive training session.

## Evaluation and Results

Results of our efforts are evaluated by the miles of bike lanes established, the partnerships developed, the changes in awareness among engineering and planning staff in advocating for bike lanes, and the changes in bicycling on Chicago's streets with bike lanes.

The following table illustrates the results of partnerships with other agencies to install bike lanes from 2000-2004:

Implementing Agency	Division	Program	Miles of Bike Lanes
Chicago Department of Transportation	Bureau of Traffic	CMAQ	40
Chicago Department of Transportation	Bureau of Highways	ASRP	17
Chicago Department of Transportation	Bureau of Highways	Reconstruction	2
Chicago Department of Transportation	Bureau of Signs and Markings	Request	5
Chicago Department of Transportation	Bureau of Bridges and Transit	Streetscape	2
Chicago Department of Transportation	Bureau of Underground	Utility	1
City of Evanston	Collaborative project with Evanston Department of Public Works and Chicago Department of Transportation	Resurfacing	1
Illinois Department of Transportation	Local Roads	Resurfacing	5
Subtotal			72
Pre-2000			31
<b>Total</b>			<b>103</b>

Over 100 miles of bike lanes have been established in Chicago to date with 32 of those miles established through partnering and at minimal cost. Eight different agencies have established bike lanes as part of their resurfacing or road reconstruction projects. The federal CMAQ program has been so successful that another \$1,500,000 was recently awarded to guarantee completion of the project and establish colored bike lanes, signed bike routes, and upgrade existing bike lanes to higher standards. Engineers now typically ask bicycle program staff about installing bike lanes as part of their projects, even if the streets were not included in the Streets for Cycling Plan. The bike lane tours have turned engineers and planners previously hesitant about bike lanes into advocates for bike lanes on future projects. And, most importantly, bike use on Chicago's streets continues to grow.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The *Streets for Cycling Plan* was a valuable tool in creating partnerships to diversify the funding of construction of a bike lane network. Through the *Streets for Cycling Plan*, bicycle facilities are now incorporated in the multi-year planning for infrastructure improvements.

## References

- City of Chicago. *Chicago Bike Map*. Summer 2004.
- City of Chicago. *Streets for Cycling*. 1999.
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. *Bike Lane Design Guide*. Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, City of Chicago, Chicagoland Bicycle Federation, and Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals. August 2002.
- <http://www.ChicagoBikes.org>

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