

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal lands, including units of the National Park Service, National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, and Bureau of Land Management lands, are at a critical juncture. Increasing numbers of automobiles in some areas have led to congestion, poor air quality, damage to natural resources, and degraded visitor experience. At the same time, growth in the number of bicyclists on some of the most scenic roadways has led to motorist–bicyclist conflicts and concern for everyone’s safety. Increased fuel costs and climate change have spawned efforts to reduce fuel consumption and minimize the "carbon footprint" of Federal land agencies. Sixty-one percent of adults in the United States are overweight or obese and childhood obesity rates are soaring (U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services, 2006). Non-motorized transportation and recreation networks are one part of the solution to these issues.

As part of its response to these challenges, the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) Federal Lands Highways Program (FLHP) has commissioned this “Guide for Promoting Bicycling on Federal Lands.” The guide is designed to provide Federal land managers the information needed to promote bicycling to help meet the above challenges. Federal land managers are in a unique position, having the authority and responsibility to make a difference. These leaders have sufficient visibility to bring together many partners to create more sustainable transportation networks on Federal lands.

This guide explores bicycling issues on lands managed by these agencies and offers ideas for designing appropriate and sustainable programs to promote the use of bicycles in these public places.

The guide is intended to be seen as:

- A tool to raise awareness of the benefits of active transportation and the nationwide movement to incorporate bicyclists and pedestrians into our transportation network;
- A compendium of selected bike-friendly projects and programs on Federal lands;
- The first comprehensive study of bicycling policies and issues on Federal lands;
- A reference for bike-friendly resources to assist in the planning and design, promotion and management of bicycle transportation programs;
- A discussion of the challenges of changing the way people move around in an automobile-dominated culture; and
- A challenge to Federal land managers to shift priorities and reallocate transportation resources to promote one of the oldest and simplest forms of transportation. Building more roads and parking lots to accommodate more vehicles is neither sustainable nor compatible with agency missions.

BENEFITS OF BICYCLING PROGRAMS

Bicycling networks can assist land managers by:

- Reducing transportation-related impacts on the environment;

- Providing better access to remote/sensitive areas;
- Enhancing the quality of visitor experiences;
- Dispersing visitors away from heavily used developed areas;
- Reducing automobile-related congestion and parking shortages;
- Promoting good health among the participants; and
- Creating a more balanced transportation and recreation network to preserve these special places for future generations.

Moreover, bicycling programs are typically a low-cost investment compared to other transportation infrastructure improvements, and generally have broad public and community support.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL BICYCLING PROGRAMS

While each biking program is unique, successful programs have two key characteristics:

Connectivity—A well-connected bicycling network has safe links between places where people are staying (hotels and campgrounds), and places people want to go (visitor centers, restaurants, shops, trailheads, and other attractions).

Partnerships—Partners can provide technical support, help leverage funding and help maintain existing trails. Projects that have multi-agency support and strong local backing can create bicycling networks that span jurisdictional boundaries to connect Federal, State, county and city lands.

The guide describes bicycling projects and programs at the following locations:

1. Mackinac Island, MI—motor-vehicle-free city and state park.
2. Cuyahoga Valley National Park, OH—transit-bike integration.
3. Glacier National Park, MT—employee bicycle sharing program.
4. Grand Canyon National Park, AZ—greenway system.
5. Colorado National Monument, CO—road cycling, high demand on narrow road.
6. National Mall & Memorial Parks, Washington, DC—bicycle patrol, interpretive tours.
7. Harris Neck Wildlife Refuge, GA—bicycling on former WWII runway pavement.
8. Trempealeau Wildlife Refuge, WI—connections to Great River Trail system.
9. Lake Tahoe Basin, USFS, NV and CA—integrated non-motorized network.
10. Route of the Hiawatha, MT and ID—USFS “Rails to Trails.”
11. North Moab Recreation Area, UT—multi-agency alternative transportation plan.
12. Fruita, CO—BLM mountain biking destination.

The most successful programs have multiple partnerships and demonstrate well connected bicycling networks. For example, visitors to Lake Tahoe, in California and Nevada, can bicycle

on a system of bike lanes, separated pathways, dirt roads and single-track trails crossing multiple counties and two states—all made possible by numerous agencies and jurisdictions working together.

Access to public lands without automobiles is not only possible; it is desirable and popular with people of all ages and physical abilities. Michigan's vehicle-free Mackinac Island, Maine's Acadia National Park carriage roads and the Route of the Hiawatha rail-trail straddling the Montana/Idaho border all demonstrate successful models for accessing public lands without motor vehicles.

BICYCLING POLICIES

Federal support for bicycling as an alternative to automobile travel has steadily increased over the past two decades. The following chronology shows continuing support for bicycling facilities and programs through three Federal transportation bills: the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

Federal Transportation Policy Chronology

- 1973 Federal Aid Highway funds first used for bicycle facilities
- 1990 USDOT policy created to mainstream bicycling into transportation network
- 1991 ISTEA greatly increases funding for bicycle facilities and programs
- 1994 National Bicycling and Walking Study sets goals to increase bicycle travel
- 1998 TEA 21 increases bicycle facility and program funding
- 2005 SAFETEA-LU significantly expands support for bicycling programs

In 1990, the FHWA Administrator described bicycling and walking as "the forgotten modes" of transportation. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) adopted a new national transportation policy that sought to mainstream bicycling and pedestrian needs into the transportation system. Nationwide goals were set to:

1. Double the percentage of total trips made by bicycling and walking in the United States from 7.9 percent to 15.8 percent of all travel trips; and
2. Simultaneously reduce by 10 percent the number of bicyclists and pedestrians killed or injured in traffic crashes.

In 1997, a key Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the USDOT established joint actions to promote alternative transportation in national

parks. This MOU called for integrating transportation planning into normal NPS activities, including bicycle and pedestrian safety initiatives.

In 1998, a comprehensive study of alternative transportation needs in national parks and public lands was initiated by Congress as part of Section 3039 of TEA-21.

CHALLENGES

While there is significant policy support for bicycling, Federal land managers face some broad challenges to integrating bicycling into the transportation network. Many managers have more immediate responsibilities that take precedence over improving bicycling facilities and programs. Budgets are shrinking and managers may have difficulty maintaining existing infrastructure. There is resistance to change in a culture dominated by the automobile.

OPPORTUNITIES

Federal land managers have a unique advantage in transportation system improvements. Unlike public works officials and other transportation providers, Federal land managers have unusual tools to manage demand and shape many aspects of the visitor experience. Federal land managers have the ability to control visitors' travel modes, routes, and schedules. They can limit or expand the capacity of any link in the transportation network in their land unit. They can design and locate access to features and attractions in the land unit. Managers also have many options to influence travel choices by promoting a particular travel mode and directing the traveler's choices with financial and other incentives and disincentives. Federal land managers should use these special opportunities to encourage bicycle facilities and programs that serve the best interest of both the visitor and the land unit.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A tremendous number of resources exist for planning, designing and promoting bicycling, that are identified throughout this guide. What follows are a few actions that managers can take now to make Federal lands more bicycle friendly.

Planning/Policy

- Learn from other bicycling programs. Chapters 3 and 5 have many examples. Three good examples include: The League of American Bicyclist's Bicycle Friendly Community Program (<http://www.bikeleague.org/>); and IMBA's Trail Care Crew and National Mountain Bike Patrol programs (<http://www.imba.com/tcc/>, and <http://www.imba.com/nmbp/>).
- Develop partnerships with stakeholders who have common interests. Partnerships can guide bicycle programs, provide technical support, leverage funding and manage and maintain non-motorized networks.
- Integrate bicycling into the land unit's long range transportation plan.

- Get involved in the state, regional, and local transportation planning process. Contact state bicycle and pedestrian coordinators at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/>.
- Adopt a Complete Streets policy to ensure safe access for all roadway users. (<http://www.completestreets.org/>). Consider bicyclists and pedestrians as part of every new road construction and reconstruction project.

Design/Implementation

- Tailor a program to meet the land unit's needs and opportunities such as making bicycles available for use by campground hosts or other employees.
- Make bicycles available to visitors through rental or sharing programs. Provide various styles of bicycles that may include hand cycles, tandem, tricycles and four wheeled pedal-cycles.
- Open roadways to bicycling and walking by limiting automobile access to more places, more frequently. While this option is not appropriate everywhere, places like Mackinac Island and Acadia National Park's (NP) carriage roads demonstrate that access without automobiles is not only possible, it is desirable and popular with people of all ages and physical abilities.
- Use existing service roads for non-motorized travel.
- Promote lightly traveled roads to create connectivity for bicycling networks.
- Incorporate bicyclist use into routine traffic data collection. Knowing how many bicyclists are present can help to measure the effectiveness of various programs over time and provide support for bicycle facility and program funding.

Promotion

- Establish a web page for bike-related resources, providing sufficient information for visitors to plan bike trips in advance of travel.
- Promote or organize events such as Bike-to-Work Day.
- Offer interpretive bicycle tours such as at the National Mall & Memorial Parks in Washington, D.C.
- Encourage children to bicycle to help reconnect children with nature and reduce childhood obesity. A few example programs include: USFS More Kids in the Woods—<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/woods/index.shtml>, ACA's Pedal Pioneers—<http://www.adventurecycling.org/outreach/pedalpioneers.cfm>, and Trips for Kids—<http://www.tripsforkids.org/>.
- Ride a bike more often.

Safety/Education

- Provide training to children and adults on bicycling safety and regulations for both roadways and trails. One popular program can be found at: <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/>.

- Make bicycle safety literature readily available to educate motorists and bicyclists about bicyclist safety and share the road concepts.
- Ensure enforcement personnel, such as rangers, understand bicyclists' rights and responsibilities.
- Enforce speed limits and driving under the influence laws to improve safety for all roadway users, including bicyclists.

IN SUMMARY

This guide to promoting Bicycling on Federal Lands is available from the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center www.bicyclinginfo.org. It contains an extensive list of valuable resources for Federal land managers, including:

- Case Studies and Model Programs;
- Links to Online Bicycling Resources;
- Federal Funding Resources; and
- Annotated Bibliography of Bicycling Resources.

Bicycling continues to grow in popularity across the country for transportation and recreation. Bicycles are an underused tool that can help land managers protect public lands and create a sustainable way for visitors to experience these lands. This guide is intended to encourage Federal land managers to serve as a positive national role model by further advancing bicycle use on Federal lands.

Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride ~John F. Kennedy