



Community
Cycling
Center

Understanding Barriers to Bicycling

INTERIM REPORT

www.CommunityCyclingCenter.org

About Us

The Community Cycling Center, founded in 1994, is a nonprofit based in northeast Portland, Oregon. Our mission is to broaden access to bicycling and its benefits through our hands-on programs, volunteer projects, and neighborhood bike shop.

In 2008, following a strategic planning process, we strengthened our efforts to build a healthy community. We focused programs within a five-mile radius of our bike shop to increase the number of skilled and confident riders in our neighborhood. We aligned our program goals with those of our program partners in order to leverage institutional resources. In 2009, we sought to influence policy decisions by securing seats on the Steering Committee and Health, Equity & Bicycles working group for the Portland Bicycle Master Plan update for 2030.

We recognized that we needed to do more to build a vibrant community where people of all backgrounds could use bicycles to stay healthy and connected. So we developed the Understanding Barriers to Bicycling project.

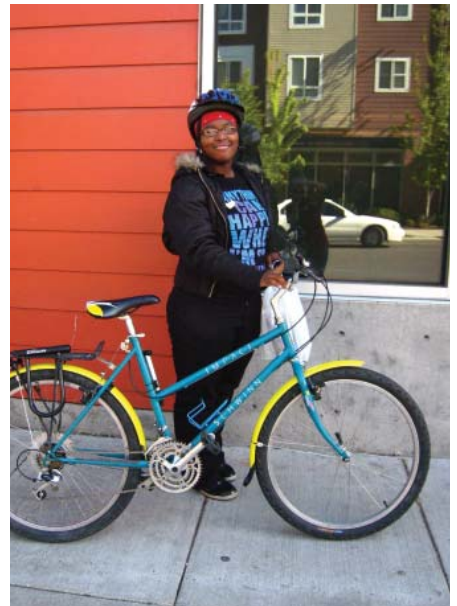
THE TEAM

The Community Cycling Center deeply appreciates the contributions of staff and board who participated in the creation of this concept and project. We thank Metro for investing in this important work. We are thankful for the expertise of Alta Planning + Design, the Initiative for Bicycle and Pedestrian Innovation, Kristin Lensen Consulting, and volunteer Staci Wolfe.

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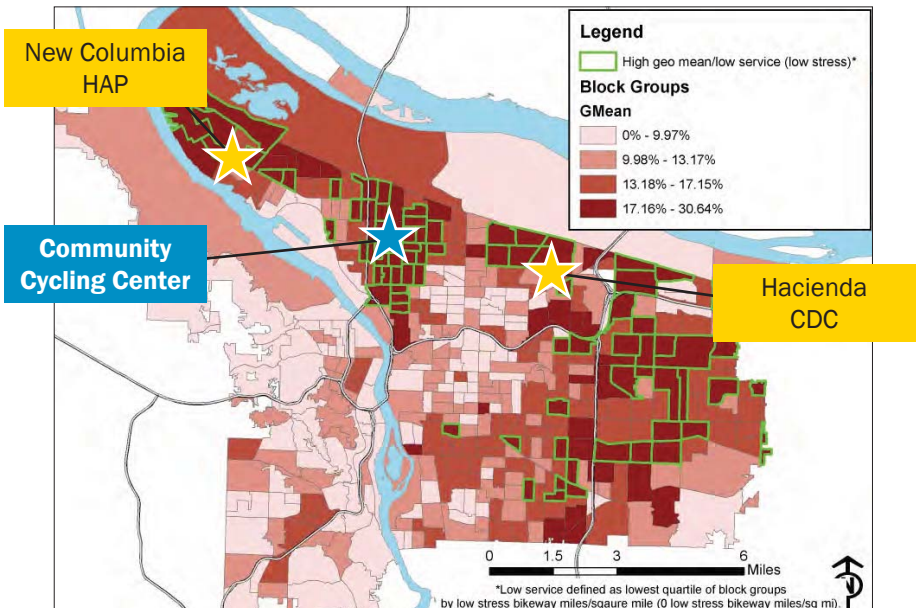
The Problem

Portland is widely known as a bicycle friendly city. Nearly 10% of Portlanders regularly ride on its 274-mile bicycle network. More than 25% of Portlanders and over 45% of school children in its public schools are people of color, yet ridership does not reflect this. We wondered why.

As part of the Health, Equity & Bicycles working group, the Community Cycling Center recommended equity be included as part of the Bicycle Master Plan for 2030 and the working group requested a network gap analysis. The results revealed that the network was weakest where the highest percentages of communities of color reside.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The Bicycle Master Plan for 2030 aims to increase bicycle ridership to 25% citywide and to reach “all Portlanders.” To meet this ambitious goal, we believe more must be done to address the needs of Portland’s increasingly diverse population.





The Project

The Understanding Barriers to Bicycling project, a two-year community needs assessment funded by Metro's Regional Transportation Options program, was initiated to determine whether there was interest in bicycling among low-income communities of color. If so, what was interfering with the choice to ride? Was it infrastructure (as the equity map would indicate)? Was it lack of culturally-specific information? Was it a combination of the two or something else entirely?

THE GOALS

- Develop relationships with community leaders and members who are committed to promoting community health and considering bicycling as a transportation option;
- Identify barriers and opportunities for bicycling among “interested but concerned” residents of north and northeast Portland who are women, African American, Latino/Hispanic or low-income through culturally-specific assessments;
- Design a pilot program that addresses culturally-specific barriers to bicycling and helps build skills, knowledge, and confidence among diverse participants to increase bicycle ridership and reduce trips by car;
- Increase awareness and raise acceptability of bicycling as a mode of transportation in diverse communities.

Process

We kicked off the project by investigating the cultural and transportation history of north and northeast Portland. Our findings are compiled in two reports available on our website at www.CommunityCyclingCenter.org.

From March through July 2009, we held more than 70 meetings with community members and leaders to introduce the Community Cycling Center and learn about community organizations and community health issues.

After the initial meetings with community leaders, we defined criteria for project partners:

1. Located roughly within five-mile radius of our bike shop;
2. Represent one of the anchors of daily life: where people live, work or play;
3. Have enough organizational capacity to participate in a partnership;
4. Recognize the opportunities and committed to the idea of improving health with bicycles;
5. Demonstrate readiness and willingness for partnership.



Outreach

The next step was talking with community members to see if there was any interest in bicycling. To overcome literacy barriers, our approach was conversational in gathering information, perspectives, and ideas. A total of 148 surveys were collected at six neighborhood events in north and northeast Portland in August 2009. Incentives (bike helmets or lights) were offered for completing surveys.

We found that 52% of respondents rode a bicycle among other modes of transportation. The majority of respondents indicated they rode their bikes for short trips, running errands, visiting friends, and for exercise.

OPEN HOUSES

Open Houses were designed to explore themes identified from the surveys. Each session provided child care and culturally-specific foods. Information was presented in an image-rich manner to address language differences and to accommodate different learning styles. A total of 49 people participated in five multi-lingual events. We provided translation through Somali-speaking volunteers and Community Cycling Center staff facilitated sessions in Spanish and English.



Partners

Hacienda Community Development Corporation (CDC) and New Columbia agreed to partner with us on the Understanding Barriers Project. Both organizations saw opportunities to address community health issues. Hacienda hoped to reduce the sense of social isolation that immigrants experience. New Columbia's goal was to increase physical activity within the community.

HACIENDA CDC

Hacienda Community Development Corporation's mission is to build dignified, affordable housing for Latino and other immigrant families in the Portland area. Since 1992 Hacienda has developed 400 units. These units have 1,800 residents, of whom half are children. Eighty five percent of Hacienda's tenants are Latinos, and another 10% are Somali.



NEW COLUMBIA

New Columbia is a HOPE VI revitalized community situated on 82 acres of land in north Portland. This mixed-income community is the largest neighborhood revitalization project ever undertaken in Oregon's history. Today, New Columbia is home to 850 households, of which 232 are homeowners and 618 are renters including 66 units of senior housing called Trenton Terrace. The community is home to more than 2,500 adults and children, with 11 languages spoken among families representing 22 countries.



Findings

The findings presented are from open house participants and show that most individuals have more than one barrier to bicycling. These findings do not represent all of the potential barriers to bicycling. They are simply the ones that came up during this project.

Most of the adults were interested in riding, and in learning to ride if they did not know how. Most of their children ride already, but often in limited locations, such as a parking lot. Both children and adults want to have access to safe places to ride and knowledge about safe places that already exist.

COST

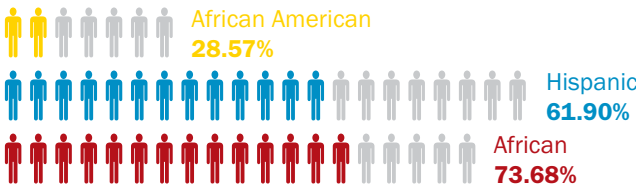
The cost of purchasing and repairing a bicycle was a major obstacle for most participants. Even for those who could obtain a bicycle at low or no cost, the cost of repairs and service was a concern.

HOW TO REPAIR A BIKE

Many participants said they were interested in riding a bicycle and would ride if they knew how to fix their bikes.

Cost

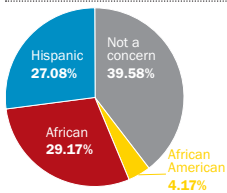
I don't have a bike: they cost too much



“Bikes get thrown away because we don't know where to get parts. In Somalia we would fix everything. Here they get thrown away.”

Total Group

60.42% Concerned
39.58% Not a concern



Focus Group Comments

- Bikes are expensive ● ● ●
- Don't know how to repair ● ● ●
- Don't know where to take bikes for repair ● ● ●
- Repairs are expensive ● ● ●
- Unaware of resources for low cost repairs and tool use ●

RIDING

The groups identified several areas in which they needed more knowledge or information about riding:

HOW TO RIDE A BIKE/ WHERE TO RIDE

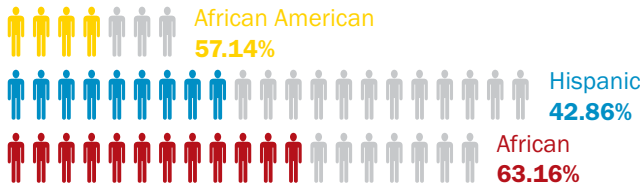
Many participants said they were interested in riding a bicycle and would ride if they knew how to ride and where to ride that was safe and away from traffic. Several also mentioned that they would like to have someone to ride with (another adult) or be able to ride with their children.

RULES OF THE ROAD

Most groups listed understanding the rules of the road, bicycle rights and responsibilities, and liability as a deterrent to riding, especially by those who moved here from another country and do not understand traffic laws.

Riding

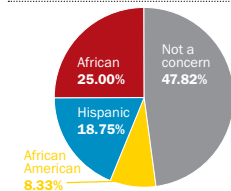
I would like to ride with a group



“I would like to learn with a group of women like me.”

Total Group

52.08% Concerned
47.82% Not a concern



Focus Group Comments

- Difficult to do with children ● ●
- Fear of falling ● ●
- Fear of the police ● ●
- Lack of knowledge about laws, rights ● ●
- Lack of knowledge about safe routes ● ● ●

Findings (continued)

SAFETY

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Most of the safety concerns centered on potential conflicts with moving vehicles, both on streets and on private property, such as residential parking lots.

PERSONAL SAFETY

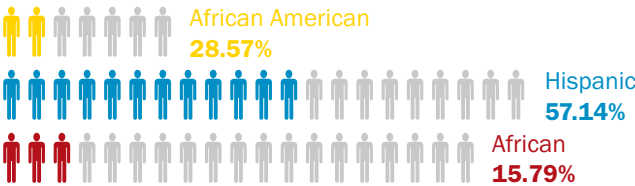
Personal safety was also a concern because of the increased visibility and vulnerability on a bicycle.

BICYCLE SAFETY

Many also expressed concern about keeping bikes safe from theft and the lack of safe places to store them, especially in residential complexes, but also at destination locations, such as schools.

Safety

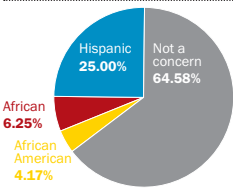
I don't have safe bike storage



“We could not leave our bikes out on the patio where there is room because they would get stolen.”

Total Group

35.42% Concerned
64.58% Not a concern



Focus Group Comments

- Fear of danger from moving vehicles ● ● ●
- Don't know how to put helmets on correctly ● ●
- Have questions about laws and insurance ● ●
- Don't know how to avoid trouble spots on bike ●

Conclusion

Additional inquiry, further program development, and culturally-specific outreach and information is recommended. Specific ideas that emerged from discussions included equipment programs, community workshops, and policy and infrastructure improvements.

NEXT STEPS

As a result of this project, the Community Cycling Center has defined five lessons to carry forward in our work.

- Increase the cultural competency of the Community Cycling Center staff;
- Pilot tailored programs for specific cultural groups and neighborhoods;
- Continue investing in community partnerships;
- Include leadership development in our bicycle programs and shop operations to build capacity within community partner organizations;
- Develop strategies to influence policies that address the environmental changes and other social determinants of health that ensure equitable access to bicycling for recreation and transportation.





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