

*Get Connected –
Promoting Non-Motorized Transportation in Sheboygan County*

By Aaron Brault – Nonmotorized Pilot Program Project Specialist

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Nonmotorized News & Updates

The construction season is in full swing so what's going on with the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program projects? Well, we can finally say we have some, not many, but some, projects ready to roll this summer. Federal and State requirements have all been satisfied and the project sponsors are near to or have let their projects for construction bids. The Howards Grove School District will see it's pathway at the high school constructed, Cedar Grove will likely see part of it's South Main Street reconstructed, Random Lake will see a Safe Routes to School project completed, and we should see bike racks installed at County facilities. Barring any unforeseen issues, we should see many of the other 35 projects constructed in 2010/2011 with a few wrapping up in 2012 according to WisDOT's current construction schedule. You've probably seen a bunch of surveyors out gathering their base engineering data as of late for many projects.

As we've said before, we thank you for your patience in seeing this process through. Undoubtedly, our projects can only benefit our community. In fact, more and more citizens are clamoring for bike/ped projects in their communities. A recent National Association of Realtors study found some enlightening, at least from my standpoint, trends.

- 75% of those polled said improving public transportation & building communities that don't require as much driving were better long-term solutions to our city's traffic/road problems. Only 21% said building new roads provided the best solution.
- 90% believe communities should be designed so we can walk and bike more and drive less, and that public transportation should be improved.
- 80% prefer redeveloping our older, existing urban & suburban areas rather than building new housing and commercial development at fringe areas.

With that said, I would say anecdotally we've seen similar convictions in Sheboygan County through our program, but even still a question we often hear is how do bike/ped projects affect the bottom line?

With all the talk of economic stimulus lately, a very valid question. In fact, a valid question anytime.

A recent study by the North Carolina DOT found that bike/ped projects have return of \$9.00 for every \$1.00 spent. Another study in Great Britain found that per dollar spent bike/ped projects put more people to work than a highway project due to the labor intensiveness and less automation of bike/ped construction. Though it's not a US study, I can't imagine road building and path building are that much different over there. A National Realtors Association study found that homes near or adjacent to urban trails sold 20% quicker than similar houses in other neighborhoods, and they found that those homes also sold for about 9% more than those similar houses. Lack of safe bike/ped facilities have been shown by the Federal Highway Administration to cost \$27 billion each year in medical costs associated with crashes. The US bicycle industry is a \$6 billion industry, \$565 million in Wisconsin not including benefits of tourism. The bottom line on health related costs are quite obvious as well. In fact, I cannot think of any disadvantage to a bike/ped project in a community.

On a slightly different note, with the ever-increasing interest in non-auto forms of transportation, we once again saw great participation in our Bike & Walk to Work Week events late last month. At five of our survey sites, there was a 45% increase in nonmotorized travel when compared to the prior month. When compared to the same time period the previous year, we witnessed a 47% increase. We had over twenty private employers participate including Kohler, Nemschoff, Rockline, Sargento, St. Nick's & American Orthodontics. We had over 70 restaurants and merchants offer specials to those who biked or walked to their establishment that week. And, we had seventeen businesses donate their services, products, and/or time. Rockline won our private employer challenge, and, I hate to say it being a County employee, but the City of Sheboygan won our public employer challenge followed by SASD in a close second. Overall, community participation was impressive.

Lastly, as a reminder, we are again sponsoring bike corrals at a number of summer events throughout the County. We will have corrals at the Harbour Centre Bike Race, 4th of July at Deland Park, the Ducktona 500, JMKAC Summer Arts Festival, Holland Fest, and Earthfest. We are still in need of a few volunteers to make them a success, so please give me a call if you're interested. Thanks!