

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

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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. Many projects are being designed this summer/fall/winter. You've probably seen a bunch of surveyors out gathering their base data as of late.

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 communities, organizations, and businesses are starting to realize the benefits of bicycling and walking for their citizens, members, and employees. Local governments are clamoring for enhancement funds to make their communities more livable and attractive places to live, work, and play. Organizations, such as AARP, are supporting and promoting things like Complete Streets initiatives and legislation where roadways are designed for all users. And, businesses, have realized a more active workforce is healthier, more productive, and misses less work. With that said, a question we often hear is how are we taking what we learned in this Pilot and other bike/ped programs across the nation to make nonmotorized projects tied to Federal and State dollars navigate through process more efficiently?

A group of bicycle and pedestrian professionals from across the nation, including representatives from the four pilot communities, have worked over the past year to develop language and guidance to provide to Congressional members on how to expedite small bike/ped projects. Currently, our grant, as well as other bike/ped grants tied to Federal Highway dollars, are required by law to follow the Federal and State processes designed to build highways. Those processes are quite efficient for projects with the magnitude of a highway, but what we have found is that those processes are quite onerous to build a sidewalk or trail or develop a promotional and educational project. Hopefully, the next transportation bill, which should be enacted in 2010, implements all, or at least some, of the suggestions for bike/ped projects.

On a lighter 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!