

Oregon Greenhouse Gas Reduction Toolkit:
Case Study

OREGON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

CITY OF CORVALLIS

Creating a Top Bicycling City in America



Featured Category

Bicycle Improvements



Location

Corvallis, Oregon

Population (Inside City Limits): 54,614¹

2020 Estimated Population: 61,029²

Applicable GHG Reduction Strategies³

- » School Placement & Programs
- » Transportation Demand Management
- » Complete Streets Policy
- » Pedestrian Environment
- » Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity
- » Bicycle Facilities
- » Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

Biking in Corvallis

The City of Corvallis has some impressive biking statistics:

- Corvallis ranks **#1 in the country** in bicycle commuting with 10 percent of residents regularly commuting by bicycle.⁴
- Within the city, **98 percent** of arterial and collector streets have bike lanes, totaling 46 miles.
- Corvallis has **18 miles** of off-street bike paths and more on the way.

What has contributed to their success, what can we learn from their challenges, and what's next for the nation's #1 cycling city?

This case study is an illustration of strategies from the Transportation and Land Use Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Toolkit, and is intended to help local jurisdictions explore actions and programs that can reduce GHG emissions from transportation.

Challenges

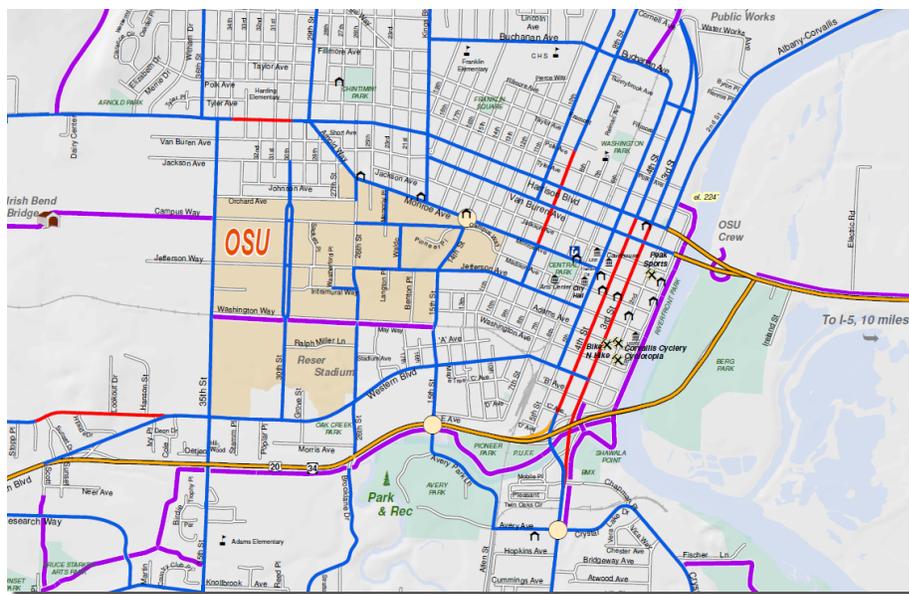
Maintenance. The community of cyclists in Corvallis has high expectations for the quality of the bicycle facilities they use. Regular maintenance of the bike lanes and multi-use paths has been a challenge for the city in terms of both time and money. In 2012, the city allotted \$182,000 for maintenance and upgrade of public bicycle facilities, which comprises approximately 6 percent of the total street maintenance budget. Bike lanes along arterials and collectors are a high priority due to the safety factor. The city routinely inspects bike lanes and responds quickly to any reports of bike lane debris or other disturbance. In addition, the city's street sweeping program includes bike lane sweeping twice per month.

Enforcement. Enforcing proper use of bicycle facilities and proper behavior of cyclists and drivers is a challenge for most cities and Corvallis is no exception. In a typical year, about 50 percent of citations related to bicycle incidents are given to vehicles drivers and 50 percent are given to bicyclists. In an effort to educate violators and reduce future violations, the city provides a bicycle diversion class that cyclists can attend in lieu of paying a ticket or going to traffic court.



Background

In the early 1970s, Corvallis adopted a policy that required bike lanes on all arterial and collector streets. That policy established an early and lasting emphasis on bicycling and garnered political support for bicycle planning. Along with the bike lane policy, the city made a commitment to support its downtown and focus retail along key streets. Today, the Comprehensive Plan includes many policies and strategies that emphasize compact development, protection of natural resources, livable neighborhood centers and transportation options. All of these elements help create conditions supportive of safe, convenient and comfortable bicycling in Corvallis. In 1998 the city created a position for a full-time Bike/Ped Coordinator to facilitate bicycle and pedestrian programs and expand the city's outreach activities. In addition to these proactive achievements, Corvallis' small geographic size, gridded street pattern and relatively flat terrain all contribute to the city's winning formula for a creating a bicycle-friendly community.



Corvallis Bike Map

Strategies

Corvallis uses a variety of strategies to promote and enhance bicycling in the city, including:

- » **Safe Routes to Schools Program.** The Corvallis School District participates in this national effort to support students and families traveling to and from schools in ways that reduce traffic, increase safety, nurture health, and contribute to a cleaner environment. The School District has a designated Safe Routes to Schools Coordinator on staff who organizes activities such as the monthly bike/walk to school event called Great Start Days, which includes a free breakfast for students. Schools have reported up to 80 percent student walking and biking participation on those days.
- » **Education and outreach.** The City of Corvallis facilitates a number of bicycle education and outreach programs, including an annual event called Get There Corvallis. This two-week event includes bike to work/

Key Successes

Comprehensive Bike Network and Standards. Through its strong bicycle policies and decades of dedicated programs, Corvallis has achieved a comprehensive network of bicycle facilities. To support the on-street network, the city's Land Development Code contains specific requirements for bicycle facilities including adequate width and landscaping standards for multi-use paths. Bicycle parking is required for all new development and 50 percent of bicycle parking must be covered. Additionally, the code contains "Pedestrian Oriented Development Standards" that are intended to create safe and comfortable walking and biking conditions. Those standards address building orientation and transparency, location of entrances and parking, weather protection and pedestrian/bicycle connectivity.

Citizen Awareness and Approval. The combination of bicycle facilities, programs, events and policies has created a culture of bicycle advocacy in the city. In the 2011 National Citizen Survey,⁵ Corvallis residents rated the relative ease and safety of cycling and the availability of bike paths at 86 percent, much above the national average.

National Recognition. The 2010 US Census revealed that Corvallis has the highest percentage (about 10.6 percent) of bicycle commuters of any city with a population greater than 50,000 people. In addition, the League of American Bicyclists has awarded their Gold Level Bicycle Friendly Community designation to Corvallis every year since 2003.

Ability to leverage funding. Corvallis' dedication to enhancing and expanding bicycle facilities and programs has provided the city with valuable leverage when pursuing federal and state funding for future projects. The city recently received over \$300,000 from an ODOT



City-funded covered bicycle racks in downtown Corvallis

school days, movies, clinics on bicycle safety and responsibility, free bike commuter breakfasts and bicycle equipment give-aways. Each year, several thousand people across the city participate. The City also promotes the Bike Commute Challenge, which is an annual week-long event sponsored by the Bicycle Transportation Alliance. Corvallis' Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission comprises seven citizens and one City Council member who meet monthly to advise the City Council on matters relevant to bicycling and walking.

- » **Expansion of bicycle facilities and connectivity.** In addition to its policy of requiring bike lanes on arterials and collectors, the city's Land Development Code requires new development to provide bicycle parking and build "safe and convenient" bicycle facilities connecting neighborhoods and businesses to surrounding activity centers. Corvallis was also able to secure grant funding to construct mid-block crossings at key locations in the city. One such crossing, located on Circle Boulevard adjacent to an elementary school, provides safe access across a busy street for students who are walking or biking to school. New covered bicycle parking facilities have also recently been constructed by the city (funded by federal dollars through the Oregon Department of Transportation) in nine key locations downtown and near the university campus.
- » **Transportation Demand Management (TDM).** The Corvallis Bike/Ped Coordinator works directly with employers, both large and small, to manage company-wide programs providing incentives for employees to bike, walk or carpool/vanpool to work. There are currently 20 businesses, representing approximately 8,000 employees, participating in the program. With funding from the ODOT, the city is able to provide support materials (educational brochures and a website) to employers at no cost. The city also organizes quarterly meetings with companies to share ideas and promote participation in the program. The program is being expanded to include smaller businesses. The Bike/Ped Coordinator also works with the bike/ped coordinators at Oregon State University and the Cascades West Council of Governments.

Financing Mechanisms

- » **Federal and state grants.** In 1998, Corvallis received a federal Transportation Enhancement grant to build the Riverfront Trail, a paved multi-use path along the Corvallis waterfront. The trail provides scenic views of the Willamette River, benches, informative signs,



public art and connections to local restaurants and shops. In addition, the city receives funding from ODOT to support the TDM program for local employers. Recently, the city received a federal grant through ODOT to construct four solar powered and user-activated mid-block crossings to improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity across Oregon Hwy 99e in South Corvallis.

- » **Private Development.** When new subdivisions were being planned in the northwestern part of the city, Corvallis planning staff worked with the developers to design the scenic Circle Boulevard Multi-use Path - connecting residents to the nearby park and natural area. The path was the result of negotiations between the city and the developer during the master planning process that took place prior to annexation of the property into the city. As part of the negotiation, the developer agreed to construct the path during subdivision development.
- » **Parks and Recreation funds.** The city Parks and Recreation department funded a new multi-use path through Willamette Park. Planning for the path was done with help from city planning staff. The path will eventually connect with the Riverfront Trail.
- » **Public and private investments.** Corvallis funded improvements to First Street, Riverfront Park and the Riverfront Trail as part of a revitalization effort. Those improvements have since spurred new private development along First Street with connections to the park and trail. New businesses include breweries, bakeries, restaurants, apartment buildings and a motel.

Conclusions

Corvallis' success in creating a bike-friendly city stems from a long-standing commitment to bike policy and dedicated leaders who have helped foster a bicycling culture that permeates the community. The city has employed a broad spectrum of strategies to systematically expand and improve the bicycle network over time. The city's approach has been comprehensive and included combinations of strategies to address the bicycle issue from all sides: regulatory, educational, political, facilities/engineering, cultural and fiscal. Corvallis has also maximized the advantage of its flat terrain, grid-like street pattern, scenic areas and riverfront. This multi-faceted approach serves as an example for other cities hoping to improve livability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by enhancing bicycling opportunities for its citizens.

Transportation Enhancement (TE) grant to construct three new mid-block crossings to enhance bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and safety. The grant request was successful in part because the city was able to demonstrate that bicycle lanes in the vicinity of the mid-block crossings were well-utilized but cyclists were reluctant to cross over the busy streets in order to reach nearby destinations. In addition, the city's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee had identified these mid-block crossings as a safety priority for the city through an extensive public process.

Quantifying GHG Reduction

The Transportation and Land Use Greenhouse Gas Reduction Toolkit³ estimates reduction ranges for several of the strategies mentioned in this case study. Those strategies with quantified reduction ranges are:

- Increased connectivity (0.2 to 2.1%)
- Expansion of bicycle facilities (0.09 to 0.28%)
- Transportation Demand Management (up to 1.7%)

While strategies are often combined to maximize effectiveness, the reduction ranges are not necessarily additive.

The Toolkit is a component of the Oregon Sustainable Transportation Initiative (OSTI), which was formed to address the requirements of Senate Bill 1059 (2010).

For more information, please visit:

<http://cms.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP/pages/ghgtoolkit.aspx>



¹ Population in 2011, based on: <http://www.corvallisoregon.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=5527>

² From the Corvallis Comprehensive Plan: <http://archive.corvallisoregon.gov/ElectronicFile.aspx?docid=209120&dbid=0>

³ Transportation and Land Use Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Toolkit Database, ODOT, 2011.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2010 American Community Survey

⁵ National Research Center and International City/County Management Association, 2011 National Citizen Survey