

REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR

FROM

THE SPECIAL COMMISSION ON BIKEWAYS

SEPTEMBER 1983



Introduction

The Governor's Commission on Bikeways was appointed early in August, 1983 as a short-term commission with two primary purposes:

- To develop recommendations for expansion of the state's bikeway system and,
- To determine how safe bikeways can be incorporated into new construction projects by the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

As the commission undertook to complete its charge, several things quickly became evident. First, citizen support for bicycling is strong in Minnesota; there are over 2½ million bicyclists in the state and there is already in existence an extensive network of bicycle clubs, advocacy groups and other organizations designed to be responsive to the needs of bicyclists; an increasing number of Minnesotans have turned to use of the bicycle as a means of transportation, and communities/organizations all across the state sponsor bicycling events and bicycle safety programs; bicycle touring has grown in Minnesota, as it has in other states, and the growth has been commensurate with the development of safe and adequate bikeways.

Second, there is little or no coordination of bicycling efforts and activities throughout the state. In addition to the aforementioned bicycle advocacy groups and organizations, there are several state agencies which expend some amount of energy and resources on behalf of bicycling; most particularly, Mn.DOT, DNR, Public Safety, Education and Tourism. However, there is no coordinating office and, consequently, none of the efforts being undertaken (either by public or private sectors) have a clear focus on overall bicycling needs and interests.

Third, the designation of specific funding for bicycling projects and programs has been periodic, temporal and insufficient, with a net result that planning for bicycling development is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. Without financial commitment, such development is relegated to a low-priority status and all efforts to improve the situation are severely hampered.

Preface

Given the realities addressed in the Introduction, the commission members concluded that they could best serve the Governor's Office, and bicyclists in Minnesota, by studying all aspects of bicycling as they currently exist and formulating a series of recommendations regarding future planning and development. After extensive sub-committee study and a series of full commission deliberations during the past six weeks, recommendations have been formulated in each of the following areas:

Bikeway Construction Projects

Administrative Coordination of Biking Programs

Bicycle Promotions

Bicycle Education and Enforcement

Services to Bicyclists

Funding for Bicycling Projects and Programs

Recommendations have been presented in prioritized sequence within each section.

Further, it should be noted that surrounding the entire series of recommendations are three High Priority Recommendations which the commission considers absolutely essential in order to maximize the potential of bicycling in Minnesota:

1. Adoption of a "standard operating procedure" which mandates bicycle consideration in any planned highway construction/reconstruction project.
2. Commitment to establish a procedure for coordinating bicycling efforts, projects and programs throughout the state.
3. Commitment to develop adequate and on-going funding for bicycle projects and programs.

Implementation of these three High Priority Recommendations will provide the base upon which a comprehensive bicycle development plan can be established for the State of Minnesota.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Bikeway Construction Projects

Recommendation A.1. Examine existing road construction planned projects with regard to considerations for bicyclists and assure that bicycle use is a mandated part of the planning, construction/reconstruction and maintenance phases of road construction projects. Design standard considerations should include:

- (a) paved shoulders of appropriate width (including accommodation of bike trailers)
- (b) safe drainage system
- (c) appropriate striping and signing
- (d) safe highway and bridge accesses

Concurrently, a thorough review of statutes currently being utilized for road/bikeway construction projects should be undertaken; (Note: Some feel that minimum design standards are incorrectly being viewed as models).

Recommendation A.2. Develop three major bikeway routes through the state, providing linkage with bikeway systems in adjacent states. Each of these routes should be named and marked with signs and each should have its own strip map and guide. Three suggested routes are as follows:

- (a) Highway 61 from the Iowa border (or LaCrosse) along the Mississippi to the Twin Cities, then to Duluth, and along the North Shore to the Canadian Border.
- (b) Northwest from the Twin Cities up the Mississippi to St. Cloud, Little Falls, Brainerd and to either Walker or Park Rapids ... connecting with the Heartland Trail to Itasca.
- (c) Southwest from the Twin Cities, down the Minnesota River to Mankato (connecting with the Sakatah Trail), then into southwest Minnesota, possibly to Lake Shetek State Park and Pipestone.

Recommendation A.3 Develop and maintain several bikeway routes for purposes of year-round commuting and touring in and around the Twin Cities.

- (a) an East-West route from eastern St. Paul to western Minneapolis, connecting the two downtowns.
- (b) SE corridor ... Hastings to St. Paul staying north of the Mississippi, and Hastings to Minneapolis staying south of the Mississippi.
- (c) SW corridor ... Shakopee or Chaska to downtown Minneapolis through Eden Prairie or Bloomington.
- (d) NE corridor ... Coon Rapids or Brooklyn Park to downtown Minneapolis.
- (e) NE corridor ... adequate, especially with Soo Line Trail.
- (f) A safe marked route to get bikers in and out of the Twin Cities International Airport.

Note: The city of Minneapolis has incorporated a bicycle facility section in its transportation element of Plan For The 80's. The above proposed linkage routes should be coordinated with the proposed inner city plan of Minneapolis.

Considerable discussion took place regarding the question of on-road vs. off-road bikeways. The conclusion was reached that on-road bikeways are preferable for a number of reasons; they are less expensive to build, easier to maintain, are already designed to effectively transport people from one location to another, and are actually safer for bicyclists. Conversely, off-road bikeways have problems with accident-relief access, acquisition, right-of-way distinction, and maintenance. Off-road bikeways are useful in certain areas, most notably redevelopment of old railroad grades and in parks and highly used recreation areas; continued development in these instances should be encouraged.

B. Administrative Coordination of Bicycle Programs

Recommendation B.1. Develop and implement a comprehensive State Bicycle Plan which addresses and incorporates engineering/education/enforcement/legislation/registration/construction/promotion/recreation/tourism/health fitness/energy/environmental and safety concerns.

Recommendation B.2. Establish an office of State Bicycle Coordinator. The primary functions of the coordinator should be:

- (a) To implement the Comprehensive State Bicycle Plan.
- (b) To coordinate all state agencies' activities relative to bicycling.
- (c) To serve as liaison between state agencies and the State Bicycle Advisory Board.*
(*see recommendation B.3.)

This position would require both project planning and program management.

After exploring all available options, it is recommended that the State Bicycle Coordinator be located in the State Planning Office.

Recommendation B.3. Establish an on-going Bicycle Advisory Board comprised of twenty(20) individuals representing the following constituencies:

- (a) Bicycling organizations
- (b) Interested citizens
- (c) State agencies (DOT/DNR/DPS/Tourism/Education)
- (d) Bicycle trade people

The division between private and public sector advisory board members should be: twelve(12) citizens and eight(8) state agency representatives.

C. Bicycle Promotions

Recommendation C.1. Utilize the already-existing Office of Tourism Travel Information Center toll-free-number facility as a centralized bicycle information dissemination center; the number should be publicized to reach all bikers.

Recommendation C.2. Develop and disseminate (through the Office of Tourism) a comprehensive Minnesota Bicycling promotional/information packet. The packet should include:

- (a) map
- (b) sites
- (c) safety information
- (d) commuting and touring information
- (e) location of bike shops
- (f) information regarding bike groups
- (g) educational information regarding the social/personal/health benefits of bicycling

Recommendation C.3. Develop and mass-disseminate an inexpensive Minnesota Bicycling poster promoting bicycling and indicating where and how information can be obtained.

Recommendation C.4. Develop/promote/encourage state-wide and city-wide bicycle events; e.g.,

- (a) State Bike Fair or Conference
- (b) Bike weeks
- (c) Bike to work days
- (d) Bike races and/or tours

In conjunction with the above, develop media exposure through press releases/PSA's/Cable TV/radio/billboards etc.

Recommendation C.5. At an appropriate time, sponsor a Familiarization Tour for bicycling in Minnesota. By "appropriate time" the commission means when one of the three proposed intrastate bikeways is officially opened. A Familiarization Tour would be particularly beneficial in promoting bicycle tourism.

D. Bicycle Education and Enforcement

Recommendation D.1. Maintain, expand and secure funding for the existing network, of comprehensive bicycle safety programs; concomitantly, establish a system for on-going and consistent evaluation of program effectiveness.

Recommendation D.2. Develop a program to educate the general public that bicyclists are recognized in the Uniform Vehicle Code as having the same rights/responsibilities as operators of motor vehicles. This educational program should include:

- (a) A promotional campaign to ensure that everyone knows the rules of "sharing the road."
- (b) Expansion of the bicycle section of the Minnesota Driver's License Manual, by illustrating common infractions perpetrated by bicyclists
- (c) Inclusion of some questions related to bicycling in the test for licensing motorists.
- (d) Increased use of bikeway signs.

Recommendation D.3. Develop and encourage use of a model enforcement program. The model should include utilization of bike patrols and regular law enforcement officers to increase enforcement of the three most hazardous violations perpetrated by bicyclists; namely,

- Riding the wrong way on the wrong side of the road
- Disobeying traffic control mechanisms
- Riding at night with inadequate lighting

Recommendation D.4. Develop legislation which would mandate inclusion of bicycle safety education in public elementary school curricula.

Recommendation D.5. Develop a resource center within the State Bicycle Coordinator's Office where schools can obtain curricular information regarding bicycle safety.

E. Services to Bikers

Recommendation E.1. Evaluate all existing bicycle mapping projects (e.g., Mn.DOT, DNR, American Youth Hostels, etc.) for the purpose of developing, implementing and publicizing a comprehensive and coordinated mapping Project Plan for bicyclists in Minnesota. The Mapping Project Plan should include development of easy-to-read maps indicating

- (a) Good touring and commuting routes
- (b) Linkage between bikeway systems both within the state and with adjacent states
- (c) Rest stops, service areas, campsites etc.

Recommendation E.2. Develop a network of logistically placed campsites and biker service areas in conjunction with established bikeway/touring routes.

Recommendation E.3. Support legislation to adopt a state-wide bicycle registration program which would accomplish four primary purposes:

- (a) Facilitate quick identification of bicycle accident victims.
- (b) Facilitate identification of lost or stolen bicycles.
- (c) Promote the legitimacy of the bicycle as a mode of transportation and lend credence to public appeals for responsible behavior toward and by bicyclists.
- (d) Provide some measure of funding for bicycle-related projects/activities.

Recommendation E.4. Work with the business community and state agencies to encourage bicycle commuting through the provision of adequate services for bicyclists; e.g.,

- secure parking facilities
- access to building show facilities
- bike commuter clubs
- etc.

Recommendation E.5. Endorse the Container Deposit Legislation authored by Senator Petty and Representative Vellenga which would help to reduce roadside litter and eliminate broken glass on highways.

F. Funding for Bicycle Projects and Programs

Recommendation F.1. That a commitment be made by the state to use federal and state transportation funds for bicycle shoulder construction, bridge access, restriping and signing for bicycle use.

Recommendation F.2. That appropriate funding be secured to establish, implement and maintain a position of State Bicycle Coordinator in the State Planning Agency. Similarly, the funding be secured for the establishment and maintenance of an ongoing Bicycle Advisory Board.

Recommendation F.3. That bicycle considerations receive some priority designation within appropriate state agencies to ensure that appropriate funding for each piece of the bicycle picture will be established. Cost effectiveness will be much greater if each agency will assume its fair share of fiscal responsibility in developing the Comprehensive Bicycle Plan.

A commitment to establish on-going funding patterns is exceedingly crucial to the success of a Bicycling Development Plan; a partial, or fragmented, commitment is not enough.

Conclusion

Bicycling is a healthy, energy-efficient, cost-effective means of transportation and recreation. More and more Americans have taken to "sharing the road" with motorists, and it is anticipated that the number of bike commuters and bike tourists will more than double by the mid 1990's. Now is the time to effect a comprehensive planning and development program to accommodate the needs and interests of bicyclists in Minnesota.

Good strides have been made during the past six or seven years, but have been approached by-and-large on an ad hoc or disjointed basis. By developing a comprehensive Bicycling Plan and establishing a mechanism for coordinating efforts already being made on behalf of bicyclists, Minnesota is in a strong position to develop a model program for Bicycle Commuting and Bicycle Tourism.

Citizen commitment is strong and in place; a like commitment from the State Government will ensure success of this important project.

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