



## **Bike Friendly West Chester Plan**

The Borough of West Chester is a diverse community. With West Chester University at its south end, the Chester County Courthouse and Transportation Center located in the downtown, and many businesses scattered throughout, it is a daily destination for many. In addition, the large number of restaurants, shops and events make it a popular destination for Chester County residents on weekends. Approximately 18,000 people reside within its borders many of whom are students and young professionals.

Due to its small size (1.2 square miles), low speed limits, one-way streets and stop signs on most corners WC Borough is, by its nature, a community well suited to cycling. Despite these facts, few trips in and around the Borough are made by bicycle.

West Chester faces many challenges; among them greenhouse gas emissions, budget short-falls, parking, traffic, access to public transportation and resident health. Promoting bicycling in the community can go a long way toward improving conditions in the Borough.

### Greenhouse gas emissions

- Bluer's goal is a 10% reduction in greenhouse gases in WC Borough by 2015. Cars and trucks contribute 18% to Greenhouse gasses in the Borough.
  - Bluer had identified 31 measures that the Borough may undertake to reduce greenhouse gases. ***Two of those measures focus on promoting cycling: Prepare a Complete Streets Plan as part of the Borough's comprehensive plan which would include programming the installation of bike lanes into the Borough road maintenance program to establish and maintain a network of bikeways. Another is to study a Bike Share program in the Borough and University.***

### Health Benefits

- The State of Michigan reports that physical inactivity results in the loss of 162 productive hours (approximately 20 days) per worker
- The CDC reports annual medical costs for inactive 65-74 year old women are \$2000 compared with \$1500 for active women in the same age range.
- Activate West Chester created to address inactivity among children and adults in our community.
- 30 minutes of bicycling per day improves health

### Parking

- Parking is a major issue in WC Borough
- \$100 parks 2 bikes vs. \$40,000 garages 1 car

### Economic Development

- Bicycle tourism and rides are big business. Bicycle vacations are the number 3 outdoor vacation activity in the US
- More then 80% of businesses surveyed in Portland emphatically state that Portland's reputation for being a bicycle friendly city is good for their business.

### Traffic

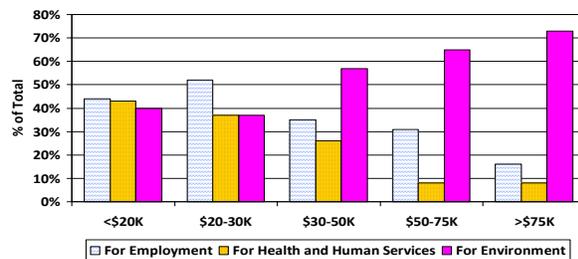
- Traffic calming is an important goal as stated in West Chester's Comprehensive Plan. Increasing cycling will reduce traffic.
- Portland Case Study: Population 530,000: Average daily bicycle traffic increased in Portland from 3,560 in 1992, to 6,020 in 2000 to 16,711 in 2008 as a result of improvements made to Portland's Bicycle network (1.6% journeys to work by bike in 2000 increased to 3.9% by 2007)
- 40% of trips 2 miles or less; nearly 90% made by car
- 28% of trips 1 mile or less; 67% made by car



Cycling is an economic equalizer: 1/3 of the population can't drive. Others can't afford a car.

- Chester County Department of Human Services Making Poverty History in Chester County PA. Survey identified transportation issues as second only to health care.
- 54% of West Chester residents fall into the Low/mod income category compared to 43% in Downingtown, 64% in Coatesville, 44% in Kennett Square, 27% in Malvern. (2000 Census)

Income level and concern about transportation for employment, health and human services and the environment



As Portland and other communities have proven, if you improve cycling facilities, you will increase cycling. Increasing cycling improves quality of life.

**BFWC Committee**

According to the League of American Bicyclists, paying attention to public needs and concerns is the key to successful bicycle plan implementation. Involving a wide variety of the community in an inclusive and meaningful way can pave the way to real world success in meeting those needs. On the other hand, ignoring public involvement--or giving it short shrift--can not only limit a plan's support and its likelihood of implementation; it can also reduce the plan's relevance to the community.

For this reason, we propose the creation of a Committee focused exclusively on improving cycling conditions and promoting cycling in the Borough of West Chester. To ensure that all the needs of our community members are met, we are recommending that the committee be comprised of representatives from the following groups:

- **Chester County Cycling Coalition**
- **West Chester Borough Government** – WC Borough as a whole will benefit from this plan (parking/emissions/health/tourism) but will also be instrumental in facilitating it. Someone should sit on the committee who is well versed in what can be done and the best way of doing it.
- **West Chester University** – The University is a big presence in the Borough. Students regularly visit the downtown area and surrounding shopping centers. Residents routinely attend functions at the University.
- **West Chester Area School District** – Representing Safe Routes to School.
- **Activate Chester County** – Activate Chester County is a collaboration among hospitals, health and recreation organizations, school districts, municipalities, and YMCAs across Chester County that are working to encourage children, adults and families to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- **Bluer** – Encouraging cycling as an alternative method of transportation is a component of Bluer's Action Plan.

**Committee Goals**

- Borough Council endorsement of BFWC program
- Gain support of Groups with common interests
- Administer and evaluate Borough-wide survey
- Develop a BFWC Bicycle Plan which follows the League of American Bicyclists 5 Es:
  - Engineering –Infrastructure issues: parking, bike routes and/or lanes
  - Education – Teaching cyclists to ride safely including cycling education for children/educate motorists regarding cyclists rights
  - Encouragement – Promoting cycling through bike maps, signage, organized rides, commuter incentive programs, facilities, events (bike to work/borough ride)
  - Enforcement – Enforce bicycle related laws and create laws required – helmets/stop signs/lights/sidewalks/hands-free
  - Evaluation and Planning – Systems created and maintained to measure progress.



## **Work Completed to Date**

- Created Bike Friendly West Chester Committee. Interests represented
  - YMCA/Activate Chester County
  - Borough Government
  - WCASD
  - BLUER
  - Greater WC Chamber of Commerce
- Community Bicycle survey completed and analyzed. (80% in favor of improving cycling in the Borough)
- WC Bicycle Map completed. BID will print
- Facilities inventory with recommendations for improvements completed.
- Brought Bike Friendly West Chester into the BLUER Transportation Committee
- Endorsements to date
  - Bluer
  - Sierra Club
  - Activate Chester County
  - Brandywine Bicycle Club
  - West Chester Cycling Club

## **Next Steps**

- Review designated bike routes for necessary safety improvements.
  - Meeting scheduled with Bob Wilpezeski December 14, 2011
- Present survey findings and bicycle map to Borough Council in January or February 2012.
- Write Bike Plan following the 5Es as recommended by the League of American Bicyclists
  - Engineering (Road improvements/Bike facilities)
  - Education
  - Encouragement
  - Enforcement
  - Evaluation and Planning
- Create an advisory group which will work toward implementing the Bike Plan and other actions that would improve bicycling and pedestrian conditions for commuters, children and recreational bicyclists and walkers.
- Obtain endorsements from other groups
- Obtain commitment from WC government to improve cycling when considering legislation related to infrastructure and safety