

Bicycle Transportation Strategic Implementation Plan: Creating a comprehensive program to immediately focus on increasing ridership

Roger Geller, November 2024

Executive Summary

This plan is predicated on confidence in what we're offering, the belief that people want what increased bicycling (and less driving) can provide, and a hope that there is significant—if latent—support for the goal of increased bicycling and decreased driving. It is also predicated on the idea that our current efforts—indeed our efforts since approximately 2016—have been insufficient to achieve our desired outcomes. What we're doing is no longer in and of itself sufficient¹.

The goal of this plan is to rapidly increase ridership in the area of Portland where conditions have been and remain most amenable to bicycling^a. We must start to regain ridership somewhere. We'll start with the lowest hanging fruit.

This plan recognizes that bicycling for transportation is a personal choice. Our challenge is to give people a reason to choose to bicycle. Previous reasons for bicycling—the provision of safer and more comfortable conditions for bicycling; the faddishness of bicycling in the mid-aughts to teens, during which time bicycling was seen as being “cool”, “hip” and “au courant”—are no longer sufficient. After peaking in 2014-15, bicycle use in Portland had stagnated and begun to decline pre-pandemic. Biking then declined precipitously during the pandemic. Because increased bicycle use is a critical element in advancing several of Portland's key goals, this decline is at odds with Portland's desired outcomes.

The two inter-dependant hallmarks of this Strategic Implementation Plan are 1) immediately creating opportunities for people to ride and 2) identifying and communicating compelling reasons for people to choose to bicycle. All actions undertaken in this plan—including suggested capital improvements and opportunities to ride—will be considered in the context of what they communicate about bicycling and how the city can use those actions to advance messaging about bicycling^b. The intent is to elevate the mental and physical visibility of bicycling and leverage that increased visibility to deliver messages that encourage increased bicycle use. In short, the goal is to give people a reason to choose to bicycle. This plan will bring bicycling back into the zeitgeist of Portland, starting first in those areas where visible success is more likely, and spreading outward from there.

**“We are living in a climate emergency.
It's time for Portland to act like it”.**

*--Title page from The City of Portland's
2022-2025 Climate Emergency Workplan July 2022*

This plan:

- Will identify effective messages meant to encourage bicycle transportation.
- Will develop a means to deliver these messages. The strategy is based on the idea of gaining people's attention through highly visible actions and then delivering decisive messages. The strategy may be summarized as relying on:
 - Efforts to regain Portland's attention to bicycling
 - Prominent messengers
 - Widespread messengers
- Borrows from the theory of Diffusion of Innovations, which relies on “innovators” and then “early adopters” taking up the desired behavior, which becomes self-supporting and spreads into wider circles
 - Will focus on the neighborhoods likely to produce the highest return on investment: where bicycling for transportation is most accessible and where bicycle use has historically been highest.
 - Will offer opportunities to ride and publicize those opportunities.

^a These are the areas where bicycle use had been and remains the highest. It is where trip distances are the shortest because mixed use development and where density. It is where the quality of the bikeway network is the highest. These areas represent the low-hanging fruit for rapidly activating high bicycle use. Activating a solid core of bicycle use is essential to a virtuous cycle of increasing use via diffusion of innovations.

^b I.e., “We are installing this diverter because bicycling is important to Portland for these reasons”...

Preamble

Though obvious in consideration it bears stating that bicycling for transportation is the result of a personal choice. Achieving the high bicycling mode split called for in Portland's policies requires the sum of many such personal choices. This is as true in Portland as it is in the world's best cycling cities.

Our challenge is to provide a reason for people to choose bicycling.

Heretofore, Portland's dominant strategy has been to invest the plurality of our cycling resources toward improving our bikeway network^c. This remains in service to policy goals to "create conditions that make bicycling more attractive than driving for most trips of approximately 3 miles or less"^d. This "build it and they will come" strategy reflected the belief that infrastructure would be sufficient to attract steadily increasing numbers of Portlanders to choose to bike. Since the early 2000s this focus on infrastructure has been augmented by smaller but no less important investments in encouragement and education.

Portland's bicycling strategy has not been producing desired outcomes since 2016.

An expectation of continued success with "Build it and they will come" was based on our experience of steadily increasing numbers of Portlanders choosing to bicycle from the mid-1990s through the mid-2010s. At that time, we observed strong correlation between bikeway network growth and increasing ridership. That relationship weakened after 2008 and seemed to completely fall apart by 2016². Portland has continued its capital investments in bicycling—arguably at a higher level of quality than previously. The result is that Portland's bikeway network is better than it's ever been. If "build it and they will come" was sufficient, our bicycle mode split today would be higher than the 7% we hit in 2014. It should be closer to 15%. Instead, bicycling regressed (pre-pandemic) to five percent^e and stands today at less than four percent. Our experience leads us to the conclusion that a high quality bikeway network is necessary, but in and of itself not sufficient.

Often discussed but perhaps discounted as a major contributor to bicycling had been a culture that celebrated, elevated and discussed bicycling at multiple levels^f. Prominent politicians ran and participated in campaigns that supported bicycling³; a burgeoning cadre of Portland "bike funnists" contributed to world-wide notice of the city's bike culture⁴; politicians across North America promised they would become better versions of Portland; articles regularly appeared in national newspapers and magazines that discussed the prominence and fun of bicycling in Portland⁵; City Club conducted a study to determine what role bicycling should have in Portland's future⁶; anecdotal testimonials of those new to town often revealed the role Portland's cycling environment had in attracting them. These, and many more elements of Portland's bicycle culture kept cycling in the forefront of thoughts of both people who resided in Portland and those who wanted to reside here. Bicycling was prominent both mentally and experientially and it served to bring new residents to the city and minimize potential increases in driving with a growing population. Indeed, between 2000 and 2018 bicycle transportation was the major contributor to minimizing the increase in driving that arrived with Portland's rapid population growth.

In recent years, dating to before the pandemic, this cultural aspect of bicycling has receded to its least prominent participants. Bicycling at many levels is out of sight and out of mind.

^c The reason this provided to bike was the elimination of uncomfortable and unsafe conditions.

^d From Portland Comprehensive Plan Policy 9.20

^e Not only did commute mode split drop, but the number of Portland bicycle commuters dropped, too, despite rapid growth in population.

^f The reason this provided to bike was that bicycling was cool, hip and fun. It was the "au courant" thing to do.

To make bicycling more attractive than driving, the world's most successful bicycle transportation cities employ obvious and effective tools to strongly cue residents to choose bicycling. In addition to the basic "carrots" of: high quality bikeway networks; ample bicycle parking; full integration with public transport; and land use patterns that support shorter trips; such cities also use policy "sticks" to make driving expensive and inconvenient. These include limiting car parking, pricing car parking, high fuel prices, high automobile taxes and fees and roadway operations oriented to walking, biking and transit rather than driving⁶. Such cities use these multiple policy and infrastructure levers to make bicycling "irresistible"⁷. Their success demonstrates the benefit of their multi-faceted approaches. Their efforts keep bicycling as a prominent consideration when people are making their transportation choices.

Portland has strong policies and plans to reduce motor vehicle miles traveled. But, unless there is a dramatic shift in local politics and culture, Portland will be unable to rely on similarly strong driving-reduction incentives to encourage increased bicycling. Portland will instead need to rely on persuasive tools to re-elevate the possibility of bicycling, on providing compelling reasons to do so and creating opportunities for a new generation of Portlanders to discover the joys and benefits of biking in the city.

Portland needs to re-awaken an awareness of bicycling and its many benefits. A reinvigoration of bicycle culture will create forums through which bicycling can re-enter Portlanders' collective consciousness as a desired transportation choice. Through multiple polls and surveys, we have clear indication that Portlanders are interested in such a choice⁸. Here is where we need to summon faith in our product (bicycling and what it creates) and our policies that elevate it as a tool toward achieving our desired outcomes.

This plan proposes to identify and implement actions that elevate awareness of bicycle transportation and to use that heightened attention to communicate the city's rationale for why bicycling is both important to Portland and beneficial to the city and to those that live, work, and play here. The goal is to do this in a manner that results in more Portlanders choosing bicycling as a means of transportation. This plan will create opportunities to ride while identifying resonant messages and delivering them most effectively. The goal is to create an integrated effort that includes professional marketing to elevate bicycling and integrates the resultant messages with on-the-ground actions. Bicycling is a choice⁹. We must focus on encouraging people to make that choice.

What happened? The decline of biking in Portland

After two decades of growth in bicycling Portland's bicycle mode split peaked at 7.2% in 2014. Steady decreases in use since then—in combination with precipitous drops in ridership with the pandemic, an increase in new residents and the absence of visible champions—has reduced both the physical and mental visibility of bicycling. Portlanders have neither sufficient knowledge about nor sufficient incentive¹⁰ for choosing bicycling as a means of transportation.

Because "build it and they will come" alone no longer produces the desired outcomes¹¹, we need a new strategy to leverage our strengths and maximize available opportunities¹².

⁶ The reason this provided to bike was that biking was less expensive and more efficient than driving.

Principal contributors to decreasing ridership.

1. In inner Portland neighborhoods—representing the most bicycle-friendly parts town—both bicyclists and the means to ride a bicycle are hidden. Neighborhood greenways are the dominant network element in these inner neighborhoods¹³. If you know how to find and navigate it the network of neighborhood greenways works well. Yet, even for longer-term residents—and certainly for people new to these neighborhoods—the network is challenging to find and can be unintuitive to follow. Because of the greenways the visible presence of people bicycling is largely absent from Portland’s collectors, which are the most visible roadways in any community. This lack of visibility is compounded by significant residential turnover, which has been heavy in the neighborhoods dominated by neighborhood greenways.
2. Dramatic growth in drive-alone commuting 2014-2018 contributed to roadways feeling less safe and comfortable for people biking. In that period the average annual increase in Portland-resident commuters was more than 10,000, which resulted in an annual average increase of 6,700 drive alone commuters. That contrasts poorly with the previous 15 years (2000-2014), when the average annual increase in drive alone commuters was 1,088 and the average annual growth in Portland resident commuters was 4,000. In that earlier period more people were annually attracted to bicycle commuting than to driving (1,327 to 1,088). Between 2014-2018 the annual increase in drive-alone commuters was more than six times what it had been previously, and the number of people biking to work dropped by an annual average of 949. Though Portland’s bikeway network continued to grow and improve and was better than it had ever been, it was not sufficient to withstand such dramatic annual increases in cars.
3. Diminished bicycle culture and lack of prominent champions.
4. Ease of driving and parking in Portland.

Bicycling is a choice. Our challenge is to get people to choose to bicycle.

There is an absence of robust communications about why to bike. Despite Portland being in a declared climate emergency, and despite city documents admonishing Portlanders that it’s time to “start acting like it”, there remains a dearth of any prominent champions—political, cultural or otherwise—stepping up to promote and encourage bicycling. This, combined with the loss of the “safety in numbers” benefit that comes with busy bikeways, bicycling has receded for many as a feasible, safe and reasonable means of everyday transportation.

Principal stratagems

This plan is premised on the following assumptions:

1. There are messages that will motivate Portlanders to modify their behavior.
2. There is pent-up desire on the part of many Portlanders to take direct action and contribute to a better future.
3. Bicycling is a popular and enjoyable activity. It is good “product” to sell.
4. “Activation energy” is needed to steer people to bicycling both because of concerns for safety and comfort and lack of knowledge about where to bicycle/park, etc.
5. Gaining people’s attention to issues important to them (environment, health, children, livability, economy), combined with both direct and indirect assistance to bike, as well as messages about

the efficacy of the bike to address their important issues, will result in increased biking and less driving.

6. It will be beneficial to engage with Portland's bicycling advocates. There is a core constituency of advocates that can be energized and empowered to help (Diffusion of Innovations¹⁴).
7. The initial focus will be on a target area: those areas with the best conditions for bicycling.
8. Begin as quickly as possible with relatively inexpensive but extensive ride offerings and home-grown marketing.

Efforts will be structured along two mutually reinforcing avenues:

1. Get as many people bicycling as quickly as possible by providing ample opportunities to ride. Institute rides and activate champions/advocates in a manner aligned with the theory of diffusion of innovations (ie., activate a core group to take action and build from that).
2. Promote bicycling through all means of promotion, especially professional advertising campaigns. Start a civic conversation about bicycling.

The following six categories of actions / approach will be the focus for action:

1. All actions are to be considered in the context of how they can contribute to messaging about bicycling and the city's intent.
2. Capital and programmatic elements to display bold steps to both demonstrate institutional / leadership commitment and to get people to pay attention.
3. Undertake actions that will inspire and activate advocates for bicycling, including opportunities for volunteering, proposed capital improvements and campaigns.
4. Create an organized framework of rides to provide easy access to multiple ride opportunities.
5. Initiate and execute a professional marketing campaign to promote bicycling.
6. Start immediately with inexpensive efforts that feature rides, home-grown messaging campaigns and capital improvements.

Suite of Actions

All actions to contribute to messaging. People need reasons to choose bicycling; they need ideas that will result in a change of behavior. Every action undertaken in this effort must be considered in the context of and coordinated with relevant communication. Each action will be evaluated through the lens of what it will allow us to say about bicycle transportation, livability, climate, health and the myriad other reasons WHY Portland officially wants to encourage more bicycling and less driving. In general, an overarching message is that we want fewer people driving and more people bicycling. The "whys" are then the basis for a conversation.

Bold capital and programmatic steps. Related to the above, to regain people's attention and demonstrate our commitment to our desired outcomes we should consider bold, potentially disruptive¹⁵ steps. Once we gain people's attention, they will at least be listening to what we have to say. Conversely, if the city is not committed to efforts to increase bicycling and decrease driving then we risk communicating that this is not a serious pursuit intended to produce serious outcomes.

Activate advocates. Among the elements available to support a renewal of bicycling in Portland are the existing innovators and early adopters of bicycling: Portland's bicycle advocates. They are working toward the same goals to which our plans direct us. They are among our biggest resources to advance efforts and convey a message. Active in their own circles, activists and advocates can be engaged to lead rides, to organize permitted neighborhood "paint parties" (to stencil the below-referenced or similar messages), to organize house parties for prominent spokespeople. These types of grass root efforts will contribute to a renewal of a civic discourse about bicycling. Providing advocates forums and opportunities to demonstrate support for safer and more comfortable conditions for bicycling multiplies the opportunities for a civic conversation about bicycling.

Lead with inexpensive efforts. Begin immediately by creating opportunities for people to ride, attracting people to ride, deliver messages identified (through surveys, focus groups, etc), undertaking inexpensive but impactful infrastructure improvements, and building relationships with interested parties.

Rides. Organized rides will serve multiple purposes. In addition to creating opportunities to ride with experienced ride leaders, the rides will also focus on opportunities to improve conditions for bicycling. “Ride on the Sharrows” rides would encourage people to “take the lane” and ride in the middle of the travel lane. Such a ride would allow for communicating a message about why sharrows are placed where they are and why the city wants people riding directly on the markings.¹⁶ “Vision Clearance” rides would highlight the benefit of removing parking spaces at intersections. Such rides would contribute to the city communicating about why parking is being removed and the need to be safe at intersections. In both cases, the rides would highlight city efforts to make bicycling safer. “Bike Buddies” and weekly commute rides could build on the success and elevation of the weekly bike bus rides to a subset of city public schools.

Other themed rides could include: “Make the Vision Real”¹⁷ rides, which would highlight the city’s goals while demonstrating what a 25% bicycle mode split looks like; “Bike to Daycare” rides and family rides along AAA routes to family-friendly destinations, which would emphasize the practicality and ease of electric cargo bikes while focusing on a key demographic.¹⁸ The possibilities for rides are almost limitless (ie., see [Portland Bike Summer calendar](#)).

Home-grown marketing. In advance of a professional marketing plan, there are inexpensive actions the city can take to promote bicycling as a preferred means of urban transportation for trips of three miles or less. First task is to identify resonant messages and then seek inexpensive ways to deliver them. One idea is *using our largest asset*—the public right of way—to communicate messages such as that shown to the right. Adding large text messages that are stenciled on local and collector streets would serve multiple purposes. It would get people talking. It would direct people to a website that spelled out what, why and how they could choose to do things differently. It would create an opportunity to activate a large cadre of volunteers who would stencil this message at (PBOT-approved) locations. This action would rely on first creating a website that would provide information about why the city is promoting bicycling and how to begin bicycling. It would also provide information about the city’s Climate Emergency Workplan.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY
DRIVE LESS
WALK BIKE TRANSIT INSTEAD
www.driveless.com



We can similarly communicate a message *using billboards, especially on congested corridors* where people driving are captive audiences, as shown above.

Part of home-grown marketing will be the creation of a website (www.driveless.gov) that would be a clearinghouse of information for this effort.

Inexpensive capital investments. Operationally meaningful Investments in the bikeway network should be designed to both address transportation needs/deficiencies and serve as a jumping off point for engaging in civic discussion. They should provide a nexus for conversation about the city's efforts and desired outcomes and how Portlanders can choose to contribute. Network investments would focus on relatively low-cost efforts to address gaps and deficiencies that serve the target area.

These will initially be focused principally (but not exclusively) on improvements to neighborhood greenways. There are two reasons for this: 1. The greenways form the bulk of the bikeway network in the target area and 2. A strong advocacy exists for such improvements.

Installation of additional diverters, addressing gaps and deficiencies in greenway facilities, and vision clearance along greenways will be the focus for investment, initially along bike-bus routes. The city will undertake a demonstration project to create neighborhood greenways where the design guidance lowers from 1000-2000 ADT to 500 ADT, which is consistent with North American best practice.

Other greenway investments will target gaps and deficiencies in existing greenways, especially those that interfere with access to key destinations, such as commercial hubs, parks and schools. SE Salmon Street, lower SE Ankeny, NE Skidmore, SE Ladd and NE/SE 16th offer targets for consideration in the proposed target area.

Messaging/Marketing. While all actions taken as part of this plan must feed into a strategy of elevating the visibility of bicycling, a marketing plan suggests a more comprehensive and sophisticated

communications strategy. The goal is to gain people's attention and then deliver messages effective to induce people to choose to bicycle. PBOT's enduring approach is necessary but is no longer in and of itself sufficient. To create change in embedded travel behavior we will have to step it up a notch or two. We need professional support including polling to find resonant messages, development of key messages integral to an overall campaign, and a sophisticated means to deliver messages in a manner consistent with our resources. We will work with advertising agencies, pollsters and marketers to develop and implement an integrated strategy to deliver messages that encourage people to choose bicycling as their means of transportation.

Creating a reason to choose bicycling will depend on creating a buzz for bicycling. Likely messages will communicate the many ways bicycling benefits individuals and the city, and why it is an important element of Portland's governance.

Target area. The best way to get more people bicycling...is to get more people bicycling^h. It will be important to rapidly elevate the presence of bicycling and doing so in an efficient manner. It is in the inner Portland neighborhoods where conditions for bicycling are among the best in North America, where people have demonstrated both the most interest in bicycling and willingness to bicycle.¹⁹ It is where we are likely to have the largest return on investment. Thus, this effort will focus on the neighborhoods west of I-205 east of the Willamette River and residential Northwest Portland. These are the areas in town with arguably the best conditions for biking in terms of bikeway network, condition of automobile traffic, supportive land use and past success.

This initial project is the beginning of what must be the long effort that will be needed to achieve the city's desired outcomes related to bicycling. To elevate the visibility of bicycling it will be important to get as many people bicycling as quickly as possible.²⁰ That will most effectively be accomplished in the neighborhoods with the best conditions and the best track record in the past. That will be the short-term goal of the plan: making rapid advances in bicycling use a principal focus of vigorous effort. More people riding creates the conditions to get more people riding. A core of riding will spread to the next levels of adopters. More people riding creates safer conditions for everybody²¹.

This effort requires an integrated approach. Every action must be seen through the lens of whether it will leverage increased awareness of bicycling and its importance to Portland. It would also require re-tooling PBOT to allow more staff to focus on this plan for three or more years.

The goal of this effort will be to elevate the mode split of bicycles (as well as scooters, and other small-wheeled means of conveyance) to 25% in the target area by 2027.

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work..."

--Daniel Burnham

^h While that seems a tautology it instead posits that more people bicycling is itself encouraging of and results in increased bicycling. Seeing other people bicycling creates mental visibility, i.e. an awareness of bicycling, and gets people thinking about bicycling. We are visual animals. Seeing is believing and seeing people bicycling—especially more bicycling—will be an important encouragement and will also validate our messaging and measure our effectiveness. Declines in ridership has degraded the feeling of bicycles belonging on certain streets in Portland, e.g. Downtown streets or neighborhood greenways, in the absence of dedicated space.

Appendix: Text presentation of plan concepts

WHY

WHAT

HOW

What we're doing isn't working

"Build it and they will come" stopped being effective in 2016
Not just Portland

Get as many people bicycling as quickly as possible

Diffusion of innovations
Opportunities to ride

All actions oriented to messaging about bicycling

Bold steps to demonstrate commitment and get people to pay attention

Be disruptive through capital projects and messaging

Bicycle use had been dropping pre-pandemic:

Network is hard to find in most bicycle-friendly parts of town; which have seen significant population turnover

Too many people driving post 2018

Safety concerns (pandemic-related)

No longer part of the Portland zeitgeist

Too easy to drive

Encouragement / messaging / advertising

Bring bicycling back into Portland's zeitgeist

Start a civic conversation about bicycling

Professional, well-financed advertising

Rides

Safety in numbers

Accessible framework

Activate advocates

Volunteer efforts

Campaigns

Bicycling is a choice

we must give people a reason to choose to bicycle

Start immediately with inexpensive efforts

Rides

home-grown messaging.

Professional marketing / advertising

Appendix: Reasons to be hopeful. Summary of Oregon Values and Beliefs Center Polling (March/April 2023) and PBOT Perceptions and Priorities Survey (2023)

Reasons to be hopeful

Fortunately, we have data indicating that people are interested in bicycling

1. Oregon Values and Beliefs Center Polling March/April 2023; Things to consider when considering “initial cycling uptake” (above Figure 1):
 - a. 46% of more than 400 Portland respondents currently ride a bicycle
 - b. Citywide, people were more than twice as likely to say something positive about (standard) bicycling than express concern about the safety of bicycling
 - c. Positive associations often had to do with the **“environment”, “health” and “fun”**
 - d. The ratio of positive associations to concerns about safety are highest in Inner NE and Inner SE Portland; they are lowest in SW Portland
 - e. A higher and statistically significant proportion of women indicated they are riding less often now than men (44% women to 28% of men)
 - f. Younger people indicate they ride more often; older people (55-64) are riding less often
 - g. **People with school-aged children were statistically more likely to be riding more often** than those without school-aged children. Those without school-aged children were riding less often at a statistically significant level
 - h. **People with higher incomes are riding at higher levels than those with lower incomes.** The highest ridership was for those with incomes above \$100,000. The lowest was for those with income below \$50,000.
2. 2023 PBOT “Perceptions and Priorities” survey
 - a. Bicycle remains about the top priorities for Portlanders
 - i. Safety for bicycling and walking is the 2nd “most important issue”, identified by 12% of the respondents. Top issue of “General repair/maintenance” was cited by 30% of Portlanders
 - b. Portlanders generally feel good about our bicycle system
 - i. 68% of Portlanders identify “bike lanes” as a positive in Portland (“Very good” or “good” quality)
 - c. 60% of Portlanders want to reduce traffic congestion
 - d. 50% identify reducing climate pollution from the transportation system as either a very high or high priority. Another 20% identify it as a medium priority
 - e. 41% of Portlanders identify increasing non-driving options (walking, biking, transit) as either a very high or high priority. Another 25% identify it as a medium priority

ENDNOTES

¹ Up to 2015 PBOT data was able to show a strong correlation between increasing bicycle network miles and increasing bicycle use. Since 2016 Portland's bikeway network continued to grow, though bicycle use began to decline. Our strategy for biking has been based on two pillars: "build it and they will come" and "tell people about it and they'll ride".

We have continued to build: our bikeway network has grown from 356 miles in 2014 to 442 miles today. Most of the network growth has been either buffered bicycle lanes (33%), neighborhood greenways (28%), or protected lanes (21%). Portland's bikeway network has demonstrably increased in quality since peak bicycle use in 2014/15. The quality of our network has also increased as our guidance for both neighborhood greenways and separated facilities has improved since 2014/15. Those 442 miles reflect not just the growth of 85 new network miles, but improvement of 53 miles of facilities that didn't meet updated guidance.

We have continued to encourage: SmartTrips; Sunday Parkways; Safe Routes to School. We have also worked to make roadway conditions safer for people using active transportation through: Reduced speed limits; Road diets; Narrower travel lanes.

Despite our efforts, Portland's bicycle use has been in decline since 2014/15. While network quality is necessary for increased bicycling, it's proving to not be sufficient to achieve the outcomes we desire.

² Include endnote that includes graph showing correlation between growth in network and growth in bicycling as shown through annual counts as well as in number of cyclists/mode split

³ Sam Adams ran for office in part on a promise to make Portland a Platinum-level bicycle friendly city. Representative Earl Blumenauer prominently and publicly created the Congressional Bike Caucus. Former Mayor Bud Clark participated annually in the "Policy Makers Ride," which attracted elected officials and agency staff from throughout the region to focus on improving the regional trail system, Metro President David Bragdon formed the "Blue Ribbon Committee on Trails" to identify prioritization and strategies to build better conditions for bicycle transportation. The effort extended from trails to on-road facilities, too.

⁴ "Shift to Bikes" (usually just "Shift") began Portland's Bike Summer in the early 2000s. It soon morphed into the annual one month—and now three months—Pedalpalooza. This elevated bicycling to such a level that European Union Ministers visited Portland in the mid-2000s to better understand the role bicycle culture had in producing consistent rising levels of bicycle use.

⁵ A small sample of articles: <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/03/travel/escapes/03Portland.html>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/05/us/05bike.html>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/21/business/portland-ore-developments-cater-to-bicycle-riders.html>; <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/239083>; <https://grist.org/cities/four-reasons-why-portland-became-a-bikers-utopia/>; <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonisweet/2022/08/31/with-bathing-spas-and-dreamy-nature-portland-is-emerging-as-a-top-wellness-destination/?sh=531e88cf3ccb>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/31/books/review/Byrne-t.html>;

⁶ "[No Turning Back: A City Club Report on Bicycle Transportation in Portland](#)"

⁷ From "Making Cycling Irresistible: Lessons from the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany", John Pucher and Ralph Buehler, *Transport Reviews*, Vol 28, No. 4, July 2008.

⁸ Three recent surveys / polls indicate Portlanders' interest in bicycle transportation. First is the Budget Office's 2022 Insights Survey, which found that more than 45% of Portlanders expressed an interest in increased bicycling if affordable and safe. This was especially true in Inner NE and SE Portland, where between 50% and 60% of respondents indicated an interest in increased bicycling. Second is the 2023 PBOT Priorities and Perceptions Survey. That survey identified that after general maintenance safety for people biking and walking was the second most important issue for Portlanders. It also found that 61% of Portlanders were opposed to cutting funding to walking, biking and transit improvements to save money and that 63% of Portlanders identify "non-driving options

such as walking, biking, and the use of public transportation...” as either a medium, high or very high priority. The third survey was a monthly panel conducted by the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center in March-April 2023 that posed questions about bicycling. It found that citywide people were more than twice as likely to say something positive about bicycling than express concerns about its safety. Positive associations often had to do with the “environment”, “health”, and “fun”. This ratio was strongest in inner NE and SE Portland.

⁹ What other cycling cities do to encourage choice to not drive:

- Make driving expensive
- Make parking expensive
- Make driving indirect
- Make car ownership expensive
- Create high quality bikeway networks and other alternatives to driving

Those above elements have the effect of stimulating thought about the choice of how to transport oneself around town.

For example, Copenhagen’s bi-annual “Cycle Account” regularly reports that Copenhageners’ bicycle principally because (from The Bicycle Account 2018):

- It’s easier (55%)
- It’s faster (46%)
- For the exercise (46%)
- For economical reasons (26%)
- It’s convenient (21%)
- It’s eco-friendly (16%)

John Pucher and Ralph Buehler, in their seminal research (“Making Cycling Irresistible: Lessons from the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany”, Transport Reviews, 2008) highlight the following about how cities in these countries made cycling “irresistible”:

- Separate cycling facilities along heavily traveled roads
- Traffic calming of most residential neighborhoods
- Ample bike parking
- Full integration with public transport
- Comprehensive education of cyclists and motorists
- Wide range of promotional events to generate enthusiasm and wide public support for cycling
- Make driving expensive and inconvenient through
 - Taxes on car ownership and use
 - Restrictions on car use
 - Restrictions on car parking
- Land use policies to foster short trips

Portland has scant ability to make driving and/or parking more expensive (with the exception of recommendation in “Pricing Options for Equitable Mobility”)

Portland needs to identify other means by which to encourage people to choose bicycling

Recent qualitative studies indicate that the use of cycling as a transport mode depends on how cycling is perceived in society as a whole, that is, whether it is seen as “odd” or “normal” behavior or as “cool” or “uncool”; whether the bicycle is regarded as a “cheap vehicle for the poor” or an element of a fashionable environmentally-conscious lifestyle”

¹⁰ Previously, the incentive to bike was that it was of the cultural moment. Bicycling was the new and exciting thing in Portland. It was a thing that helped us define who we were and what we stood for. That all relied on the provision of “carrots” to ride bicycles: improving infrastructure; write-ups in national newspaper and magazines, participating in the new “it” thing that was sweeping not just Portland, but the entire country. In recent years that cultural aspect has faded into the background and the incentive to bicycle seems largely extinguished in the public at large.

¹¹ If “Build it and they will come” was still effective, then bicycle mode split would likely be edging up closer to 12-15 percent, rather than having receded back down to 5 percent. Growth of both extent and quality of Portland’s bikeway network has continued without stop for the past 15 years. Yet, ridership has stagnated.

¹² A “SWOT” analysis of this effort:

- A. Strengths
 - a. Knowledgeable, creative, experienced staff
 - b. Talented communications and messaging within PBOT
 - c. Bicycle network
 - d. Land use
 - e. Positive attitudes toward bicycling
 - f. Interested, engaged Commissioner
 - g. Passionate advocates
 - h. Approved plan for transportation pricing options (POEM)
- B. Weaknesses
 - a. Little funding
 - b. Inability / unwillingness to increase cost of driving via parking pricing
- C. Opportunities
 - a. Desire to “return to normalcy”
 - b. Summer
 - c. Climate change
 - d. Health
 - e. Freeway construction
 - f. Civic pride as a “cycling city”
- D. Threats

¹³ The “most bicycle-friendly parts of town” are those neighborhoods within an approximately four mile radius of downtown, principally east of the Willamette River. These areas are characterized by: A land use pattern conducive to short trips and a high-quality bikeway network. These are the neighborhoods that have achieved the highest bicycle commute mode splits and that have demonstrated the highest bicycle use in Portland’s annual bicycle counts.

¹⁴“One theory of behavioral and social change that may be relevant to transportation cycling is Diffusion of Innovations (DOI). DOI seeks to explain the process by which an idea or practice – an innovation – spreads in a social system over time (Rogers, 2003). According to DOI theory, an innovation can be a practice that potential adopters in a social system are aware of, but have either not yet formed an attitude towards, or have not yet adopted or rejected for themselves (Rogers, 2003). Therefore, bicycling for transportation can be considered an innovation in the context of DOI theory, particularly in places or populations where prevalence is low. DOI has been applied to understand or promote the adoption of other practices that are not strictly new but have not been widely adopted...” from [Journal of Transport & Health Volume 3, Issue 3](#), September 2016, Pages 346-356, “Behavioral theory and transportation cycling research: Application of Diffusion of Innovations”, Eileen K. Nehme ^a, Adriana Pérez ^b, Nalini Ranjit ^c, Benjamin C. Amick III ^d, Harold W. Kohl III.

A focus on “rapidly increasing bicycle use” is consistent with this theory. Increased bicycling creates a self-supporting cycle of attracting more people to bicycle. It will do this by focusing multiple actions on elevating both the mental and physical visibility of bicycling. “Diffusion of Innovations” posits a cascade effect for how populations adopt new behaviors. The five stages of DOI are awareness, persuasion, decision, implementation and continuation. This effort will focus initially on “awareness” and create visibility for bicycling by first elevating bicycle use among a core of “innovators” and “early adopters.” In turn, this will help spread bicycling to a broader population base with a goal of persuasion and ultimately spreading bicycle use to both early and late majorities. Innovators and early adopters pave the way and create enough of a “buzz” that adoption then spreads to a wider base.

This model of core adoption followed by more general parallels Portland’s experience with bicycling. In the mid 2000’s and 2010’s bicycle use in Portland was adopted by relatively small minorities of the population. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, as word of bicycling in Portland was spreading city- and nation-wide, there were only a small fraction of Portlanders biking regularly. Even at its peak in 2013-2014, there were never more than approximately seven percent of Portlanders bicycling to work. Of course, an uneven distribution of bicycle use in

Portland produced relatively high bicycle use of 10-15 percent in core neighborhoods and as high as 25 percent in the highest use census tracts.

¹⁵ Former Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Ryback [addressed Portland area leaders](#) at a regional forum in 2016. He advocated disruption in our transportation system, stating that “We cannot possibly get out of the congestion mess that we have...if we don’t disrupt the system of how we build transportation”.

¹⁶“Taking the lane” has several positive results for people biking. First, it places people bicycling further from the door zone of parked cars. Second, it reduces opportunities for drivers to pass. It is when cars are passing bikes that the potential for a crash is highest and thus, when discomfort is similarly highest for the cyclist. Reducing opportunities to pass also diminishes the utility of the roadway for driving—which could discourage the use of the street for cut-through traffic. Third, a motorist operating at the speed of a leading cyclist serves to lower overall speeds on the roadway.

¹⁷The intent of “Make the Vision Real” rides is to visually and physically create the bicycle volumes envisioned in Portland’s transportation planning. The focus would be on commercial districts and would require 500-1000 cyclists riding through a district. Seeing is believing so the focus is on creating a realistic visualization of high bicycle mode split. Organizing and promoting the ride would have the additional benefits of building interest, coalitions, and educational opportunities about why the city is promoting bicycling.

¹⁸ A poll conducted for PBOT by the Oregon Values and Belief Center in March-April 2023 found that people with school-aged children were statistically more likely to be riding more often than those without school-aged children.

¹⁹ The [2022 Portland Insights Survey](#) found that interest in increasing bicycle use was highest in Northwest, North, Northeast (inner) and Southeast (inner) Portland. These are the same areas that have historically had the highest bicycle use.

²⁰ *...the “human infrastructure” formed by Amsterdam’s critical mass of cyclists contributes to encourage cycling both through **its physical presence on the streets**, and through its role in creating a social environment favorable to cycling.*

Human infrastructure in the form of group rides, social networks for activists and the presence of bike commuters...encourages cycling.

Also from the research:

- *“The existence of a critical mass of cyclists may be essential to gain further traction for cycling.”*
- *“The majority of the factors which encourage cycling are at least partly dependent on the existence of a critical mass of existing cyclists”.*
- *“...social norms and cultural setting are more important than urban form and infrastructure in encouraging cycling in mature cycling cities”.*

From “The human infrastructure of a cycling city: Amsterdam through the eyes of international newcomers”.

We need to get people bicycling so we can get more people bicycling in a virtuous cycle.

²¹ Arguably, on most of our bikeways there is little the city could do that would improve safety that would not be accomplished more immediately and more effectively than a strong presence of people biking on the streets. This is especially true in most readily achievable in the most bicycle-friendly parts of town.