LivablPlaces Update
Emerging Trends in Community Planning and Design

The Many Advantages of Traveling by Bicycle — Our Cities Respond: There are multiple economic, health and environmental advantages of giving residents the option of traveling short distances by bike instead of car. For one, we know that reducing auto use means a reduced need for parking lots which reduces the need for paved, impervious surfaces which leads to less water pollution and cooler ambient temperatures. However, an advantage that is not often considered is the decreased cost of homes, retail, and commercial buildings.

According to architect Steve Mouton, parking a car requires about 350 square feet. Parking a bicycle requires about 15 square feet. That 335 square foot difference, in very expensive places where land is $400 per square foot equals $134,000 per parking space. So planning a neighborhood where service industry employees (and their supervisors) can live, bike or take transit to work allows developers to cut housing and office costs by $134,000 per worker by eliminating the cost of one parking space each, both at work and at home.

A number of cities are now using a variety of approaches to make bicycling a more convenient and viable transportation option for their residents.

Providing Safe and Well Connected Lanes and Paths for Bicycles: Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, a national leader in addressing climate change, wants to triple the number of people who commute by bike. To determine how best to accomplish this goal, the City of Seattle questioned residents regarding the factors that determine whether they ride a bike to their destination. Sixty six percent noted that traffic safety is the most important factor, while 57 % noted travel time.

These results led the City to conclude that providing a safe and convenient place to ride is the most important step they could take to increase the number of trips taken by bicycle. Thus, the Seattle City Council recently approved a 10-year Bicycle Master Plan calling for 118 miles of new bike lanes and 19 miles of trails, as well as line markings and signs to create awareness of cycling across the city.

Other cities are on the same track — in Austin, Texas, $250 million worth of bike trails are planned for the metro area, including 32 miles directly through the town center. Dallas/Fort Worth has $900 million in bike trails planned. "Texas is reaching out to embrace bicycling like never before," says Robin Stallins of the Texas Bicycle Coalition. "That says a lot about a shift of cultural values."

Chicago has unveiled a plan for 500 miles of designated bike routes; and in New York, Mayor Michael Bloomberg has called for 200 miles of bike paths throughout the city by 2009.

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom last month set a goal for residents to use bicycles for at least 10 percent of their trips by 2010. The city currently has 126 miles of designated bike lanes and paths and muni buses are equipped with bike racks.

The League of American Bicyclists continues to point to California’s own city of Davis as the best bicycling town in the nation. It is the only city to be granted platinum status by this national organization.

Davis started its quest to accommodate bicycles very early and recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of its first bike lane on Sycamore Lane which officials say may be the first bike lane in the nation. Almost every major street in Davis now has a bike lane and there are miles of lovely, off street paths. The city has built 27 bridges over or tunnels under streets for bicycles and pedestrians, including several that cross the city’s two major freeways.

The percentage of trips taken by bicycle has varied over the years; and as Davis has grown, the percentage of bicycle trips has decreased (probably because growth at the edges has resulted in employees living farther from their major employer, the University of California in Davis. However city officials still place bicycle use at 17% of trips, a number that rivals some European cities.

The lessons from Davis for growing communities is clear — require every new development to tie into the bicycle network so that over the years, as the city grows, the bike network grows too. Keep the city as compact as possible, zone for a small commercial center in every neighborhood, and maintain downtown as the community’s retail and entertainment center.

Making Loaner Bicycles Readily Available: Several cities, including Arcata, California, have experimented with distributing bicycles as loaners around town so that residents might easily pick one up and ride it to their destination. Sadly, these experiments failed as the free bikes gradually disappeared. Now Paris, France has developed a loaner-bicycle program that seems to work.

This summer, Paris kicked off a "vélorution" making available 10,648 rentable bicycles, or vélos. By next year, some 1,400 rent stations and 20,600 bikes are scheduled to be in place. Soon, in Paris proper, one will never be more than 900 feet from a set of "cheap wheels.” The Parisian concept is computerized and credit card driven. Each station has a large ATM-sized panel that gives instructions in French, German, English, and
For Livable Communities. For subscription information call us at ☎ (916) 448-1198. If you have news from your area to include in future issues, please send it to: LPU, 1303 J Street, Suite 250, Sacramento, CA

Bikestation Long Beach was the first facility of its kind established in the U.S. and offers secure bicycle parking near transit hubs as well as related services that make cyclists' lives easier.

Bicycles as an Economic Development Strategy: Cottage industries have become a side benefit of Portland, Oregon's effort to make bicycles an attractive transportation option. A report prepared last year for the City of Portland estimated that 600 to 800 people worked in the cycling industry in some form. A decade earlier the number would have been more like 200 and been made up almost entirely of employees at retail bike stores.

There are about 125 bicycle-related businesses in Portland, including companies that make bike racks, high-end components for racing bikes, clothing for cyclists, and aluminum for bikes mass-produced elsewhere.

Climate Change and Highways: An interesting new report from the Sightline Institute in Seattle takes a look at the greenhouse gas implications of building a new lane-mile of highway in a congested urban area. The conclusion — Every extra one-mile stretch of lane added to a congested highway will increase climate-warming CO2 emissions more than 100,000 tons over 50 years. Emissions over the 50 year time period are broken out as follows: Road construction and maintenance - 3,500 tons; net congestion relief - 7,000 tons; additional traffic on the roadway - 30,000 to 100,000 tons; and the grand total of greenhouse gas emissions per lane mile - 116,5000 to 186,500 tons.

Oregon Voters Overturn Property Rights Initiative: Oregon voters have approved a property rights initiative that scales back the development rights landowners were granted by the state's Measure 37, passed in 2004. The vote was a convincing 61% to 39%.

According to ballot initiative supporters, since the 2004 measure was passed, there have been 7,500 development claims, asking for the right to develop everything from single homes and 100-home subdivisions to shopping malls, resorts and gravel pits — much of it on rural farmland and forestland. Apparently, voters have concluded that zoning is a good idea after all.

One clincher for the Paris project — it isn't costing the city anything, and should be self-supporting. The program is financed by advertising behemoth JC Decaux — in exchange for 1,600 billboards around the city.

A financing scheme that might be more viable for U.S. cities has been employed by the city of Copenhagen. The cost of their loaner bicycle program is paid for by sponsors, who pay about $280 a year for a minimum of 25 bikes. In return for sponsorship, the bikes carry advertisements, which appear on the top tube panel and disk wheels.

Offering Valet Parking/ Safe Parking: In San Francisco, valet bicycle parking is now commonplace at major events in town, including Giants games, street fairs and rock concerts, and commercial developers in San Francisco are required to provide secure bike parking.

Other communities are offering bicycle self-parking garages. Bikestation Long Beach is strategically located on the downtown transit mall, a nexus for light rail, buses, pedestrians, and a local shuttle that services neighborhoods and key attractions. Nearby, more than 30 miles of dedicated shoreline and river bicycle paths, as well as on-street bicycle travel accommodations, connect to other parts of the city.

Bikestation Long Beach offers attended indoor bicycle parking (free during regular business hours), professional repair services, a bike shop, and more. An advanced entry and membership system allows cyclists paying a fee to have exclusive 24/7 access to secure, indoor bike parking.

Bikestation Santa Barbara offers a self-parking garage with showers, a changing area, and a bathroom. In the decade since the first U.S. facility opened in Long Beach, Bikestations have sprung up in other California cities (San Francisco, Palo Alto, Santa Barbara, Berkeley, and Fruitvale) in addition to Seattle and Chicago. Many others are on the way. For more information, go to www.bikestation.org.

A similar program in Lyon now has 4,000 bicycles that get ridden 20,000 times a day, more than 40 percent of which are used by office workers. Paris officials hope to register 200,000 rides a day.

To protect against bicycles disappearing, initial membership in the Paris program puts a hold of 150 euros on the borrower’s credit card. People are charged for bikes that aren’t returned. As an additional precaution, there is an alarm inside the bike that will go off if it appears to be missing.

Another bike station in Paris offers another service: valet parking or "safe parking." Bicyclists paying a fee to have exclusive 24/7 access to their bike are given a number to call when they are ready to pick their bike up. A valet then retrieves the bike, cleans it with a pressure washer, and brings it to a bike station where the phone number is posted. The rider is then notified and can pick up their bike.

Decaux – in exchange for 1,600 billboards around the city.

In the decade since the first U.S. facility opened in Long Beach, Bikestations have sprung up in other California cities (San Francisco, Palo Alto, Santa Barbara, Berkeley, and Fruitvale) in addition to Seattle and Chicago. Many others are on the way. For more information, go to www.bikestation.org.

Decaux – in exchange for 1,600 billboards around the city.

A financing scheme that might be more viable for U.S. cities has been employed by the city of Copenhagen. The cost of their loaner bicycle program is paid for by sponsors, who pay about $280 a year for a minimum of 25 bikes. In return for sponsorship, the bikes carry advertisements, which appear on the top tube panel and disk wheels.

Offering Valet Parking/ Safe Parking: In San Francisco, valet bicycle parking is now commonplace at major events in town, including Giants games, street fairs and rock concerts, and commercial developers in San Francisco are required to provide secure bike parking.

Other communities are offering bicycle self-parking garages. Bikestation Long Beach is strategically located on the downtown transit mall, a nexus for light rail, buses, pedestrians, and a local shuttle that services neighborhoods and key attractions. Nearby, more than 30 miles of dedicated shoreline and river bicycle paths, as well as on-street bicycle travel accommodations, connect to other parts of the city.

Bikestation Long Beach offers attended indoor bicycle parking (free during regular business hours), professional repair services, a bike shop, and more. An advanced entry and membership system allows cyclists paying a fee to have exclusive 24/7 access to secure, indoor bike parking.

Bikestation Santa Barbara offers a self-parking garage with showers, a changing area, and a bathroom. In the decade since the first U.S. facility opened in Long Beach, Bikestations have sprung up in other California cities (San Francisco, Palo Alto, Santa Barbara, Berkeley, and Fruitvale) in addition to Seattle and Chicago. Many others are on the way. For more information, go to www.bikestation.org.

Decaux – in exchange for 1,600 billboards around the city.

In the decade since the first U.S. facility opened in Long Beach, Bikestations have sprung up in other California cities (San Francisco, Palo Alto, Santa Barbara, Berkeley, and Fruitvale) in addition to Seattle and Chicago. Many others are on the way. For more information, go to www.bikestation.org.

Decaux – in exchange for 1,600 billboards around the city.

In the decade since the first U.S. facility opened in Long Beach, Bikestations have sprung up in other California cities (San Francisco, Palo Alto, Santa Barbara, Berkeley, and Fruitvale) in addition to Seattle and Chicago. Many others are on the way. For more information, go to www.bikestation.org.

Decaux – in exchange for 1,600 billboards around the city.

In the decade since the first U.S. facility opened in Long Beach, Bikestations have sprung up in other California cities (San Francisco, Palo Alto, Santa Barbara, Berkeley, and Fruitvale) in addition to Seattle and Chicago. Many others are on the way. For more information, go to www.bikestation.org.

Decaux – in exchange for 1,600 billboards around the city.

In the decade since the first U.S. facility opened in Long Beach, Bikestations have sprung up in other California cities (San Francisco, Palo Alto, Santa Barbara, Berkeley, and Fruitvale) in addition to Seattle and Chicago. Many others are on the way. For more information, go to www.bikestation.org.

Decaux – in exchange for 1,600 billboards around the city.