

Better Biking: Working Towards Platinum BFU Rating

Intro

The University of Utah has an incredible opportunity to engage in our goal of being an environmental-conscious and forward-thinking community. Working to increase better bike infrastructure is a critical way to do this. Biking has been linked to a healthy body, mind, and life. These recommendations are directly linked to how *The League of American Bicyclists* think the U could cement itself as an industry leader.

Encouragement -

In amplifying our Encouragement E, *The League of American Bicyclists* recommended the U to “Launch a bicyclist mentorship program for peer-to-peer.” Two programs stood out in how other Platinum institutions met this type of recommendation: Bike Buddy programs & Colorado State’s Back on the Bike program.

Bike Buddy: Many institutions have bike buddy programs to meet the goals of peer mentorship. [UCLA’s](#) specifically helps partner up folks who haven’t been on a bike in a while with experienced UCLA cyclists. Their program is free and provides buddies with traffic basics, guidance on locking up a bike, and building confidence while riding.

Back on the Bike: CSU’s [program](#) originated for staff and faculty 50 years and older but has evolved since 2015 to be open to all employees. The program incentivises a commitment to try to commute a certain number of times weekly (amount depending on the season) by offering an individualized bike travel training meeting to provide guidance in finding the best cycling commute route for participants, a bike tune up, and 8 monthly “lunch and learn” presentations covering a variety of bike topics. Since it is one of few programs that center mainly on employees, this type of mentorship program could also bolster our endeavors in equity.

Education -

When it comes to preparing cyclists for how to operate successfully both on and off campus, education is one of the most useful tools that the University of Utah can offer. A lack of cycling knowledge can be a significant barrier to access - thankfully, that is easily overcome. *The League of American Bicyclists* key recommendation for the U’s shift to a Platinum rating is to “Offer frequent cycling classes & maintenance workshops”. Discussed below are examples of education-related programs at Platinum-ranked universities:

- **Bike Friendly Driver course:** this course, designed by *The League of American Bicyclists*, educates both drivers and cyclists on the best ways to share the road. It is offered at UCI and helps create a safer environment for cyclists. An exam following the course tests knowledge.
- **Bike Safety Class:** those who receive a bike citation at Stanford can elect to participate in a Bike Safety Class to waive their ticket. Even better, the more education cyclists receive, the less likely they will be to get a ticket.

- Campus Bicycle Safety Stations: cyclists at Stanford can show up once a month to get a free bike safety check-up, inflate their tires, ask questions about bike laws or how to ride on campus, and learn how to lock their bike up properly.
- Urban Cycling Classes: offered by UC Berkeley, these classes help cyclists overcome the daunting nature of cycling in urban areas.
- Bike Shop: UC Santa Barbara has a campus bike shop funded by student fees where students can get their bike repaired. This shop also acts as a hub for classes, as Berkeley will partner with community bike organizations to offer free classes.
- Winter Cycling Classes: the University of Minnesota offers classes that teach winter cycling and winter bike maintenance. In areas where cycling is limited by weather, courses like these can inspire confidence in riders.

Evaluation & Planning -

The League of American Bicyclists Recommendation:

“Update the 2011 campus bike master plan to reflect current needs, and continue to guide the long-term physical and programmatic vision for your campus.”

University of Utah sensitive recommendation:

By adding more consideration to the impact that jurisdictional boundaries have on the flow of infrastructure, the U would have the opportunity to engage stakeholders from Salt Lake City and Salt Lake County about making more continuous bike pathing. The University has greatly increased bike pathing on campus but that leaves the challenge of connecting these paths to the existing infrastructure outside of the university boundaries. Overall, the 2012 U Bike Master Plan (uBMP) was a safe plan which did not extend past the needed improvements. That is not to say it was not successful, it was successful. Many of the planned improvements were implemented but there is an increased need for more infrastructure. The next uBMP should be aggressive and extend beyond what is required.

Jon Larsen, the Director of SLC-DOT, and Tom Millar, the Active Transportation Director, have been “on a tear” about creating more bike lanes within city limits. The SLC Bike Master Plan is roughly 6 years old and an update is surely in the works. These factors have created an excellent opportunity to build off each other when funding is fully available for another comprehensive bike master plan. Doing a piecemeal situation will be a bandaid strategy. Engaging more stakeholders and communities will extend the impact of the plan by extending funds, knowledge, and implementation strategies.

The same was said in the public comments of the 2012 plan.

# of Respondents	Themes Within Category
62 Total	Accessibility
16	Issues with lack of bikeways
15	Issues with stairs
15	Desire for better integration with city bikeways
13	Desire for better connections across campus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From lower campus to upper campus • From central campus to hospital areas and Research Park
11	Thought bikeable paths were plentiful
8	Issues with lack of wayfinding signs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify where bike paths go and to avoid trouble areas

University of Utah 2012 Bike Master Plan

The dream of having a flawless shift from university property to public or private property would be an excellent way to increase bike infrastructure. This coordination can only happen in a long-term master plan that invites each community to the table.

The League of American Bicyclists Recommendation:

“Expand efforts to evaluate crash statistics and produce a specific plan to reduce the number of crashes on campus.”

University of Utah Sensitive Design:

This is an incredibly difficult task to accomplish. While the research found some strategies for increased evaluation of crash statistics, there is the obstacle of the community reporting them. Even the researchers themselves explained that they had been part of bike/pedestrian crashes on campus but decided not to report. There is an opportunity to integrate crash statistics with bike registration. A professor from UC-Santa Barbara created **BikeMaps.org** which has a small presence in the Salt Lake area already. By building off an already created format, it would be more accessible and user-friendly than other options.

Creating a small bike “package” with maps, safety tips, bike registration, and ways to report crashes that could be given out to new students or interested community members could start to break the stigma that is associated with reporting to the police. Making the option to report easier by creating small signs around campus with bike safety tips and reporting could go a long way in making people feel more empowered to report. From the uBMP, “For those who do not bike, perceived lack of safety is one of the most frequently cited reasons for not riding.”

Engineering -

Encouraging and incentivizing cycling to and around campus can help to increase the cycling modal share, but significant progress can only be made by continuous improvement and innovation of cycling infrastructure. Infrastructure improvements can take many forms, including making cycling safer, comfortable and convenient. Some projects are already in progress to better link different parts of campus and remove barriers to cycling. These and future improvements could be further leveraged by a new revision of the university's Bike Master Plan. Such a revision is already underway and would benefit from increased integration with the Bike Master Plan of the greater Salt Lake area. This would help to increase cycling to and from campus. Portland State University, a BFU Platinum rated institution, takes this a step further with their Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC) where the data they generate actively works to support their mission "Let knowledge serve the city." Transportation data generated by this center helps to inform decision making both on and off campus.

Another potential area of cycling infrastructure improvement might come in the form of increased, high-quality bike parking at popular destinations, and for long-term situations. Abundant bike parking is not always sufficient, especially when an owner may need to leave their bike overnight, or the bike is not allowed in a dorm or apartment. Many bikes are very expensive and increasing modal share might be as simple as ensuring a bike owner can return to their bike and find it in the same condition that they left it. High-quality bike parking secures bikes from both theft and inclement weather.

Conclusion -

Platinum BFU ranked institutions seemed to have one thing in common - their institutions as a whole were looking at ways to become more carbon neutral. These were the institutions that had revenue coming from student fees for bike infrastructure specifically, allowing them to crank out multiple infrastructure projects every year. They are working towards entire culture shifts where not taking a car to campus is to become the norm. This seems possible at the U, but Ginger's office would not be able to do it alone - it would need to be an entire institutional initiative. We can probably still achieve Platinum ranking without this, but it would be considerably easier if it became a priority for the school as a whole.