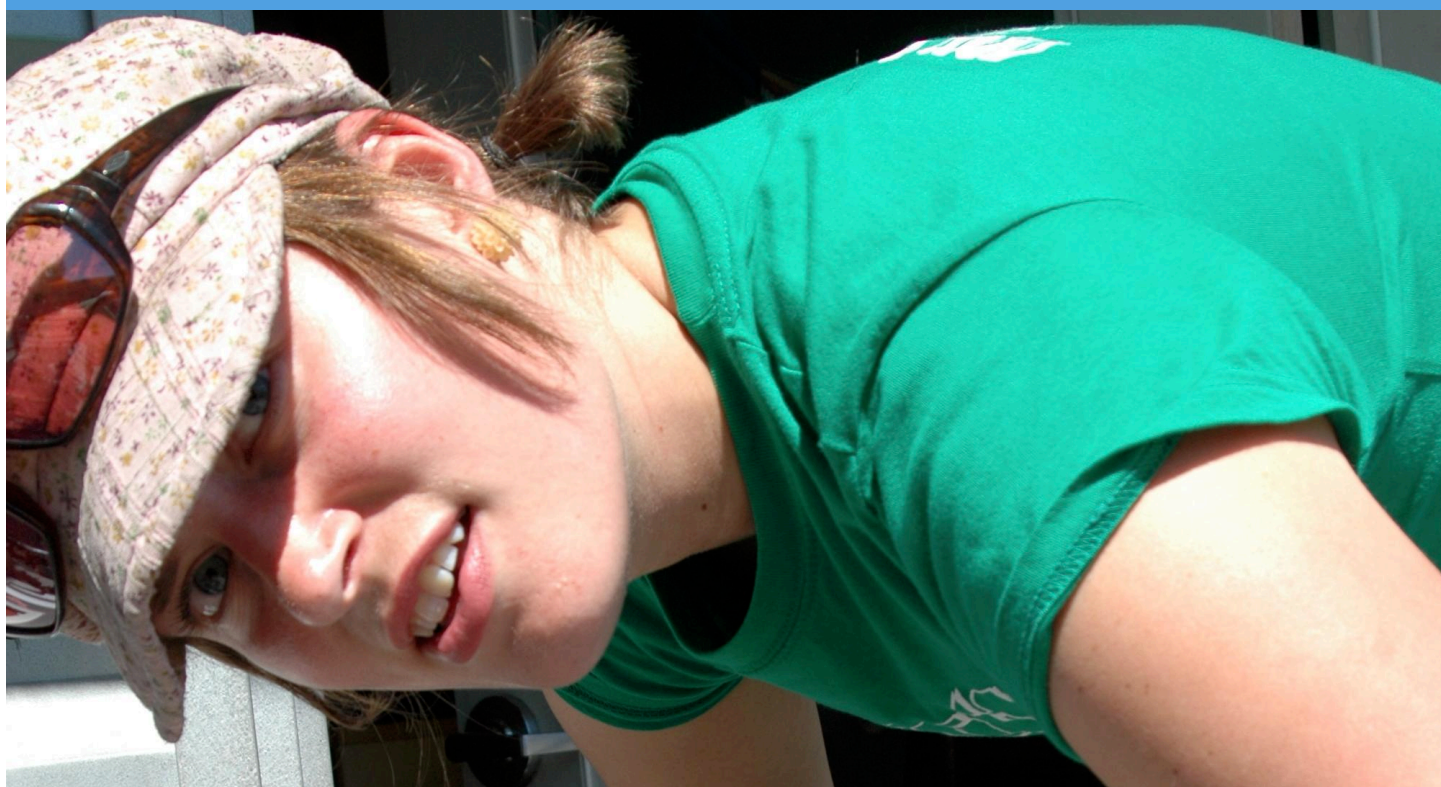
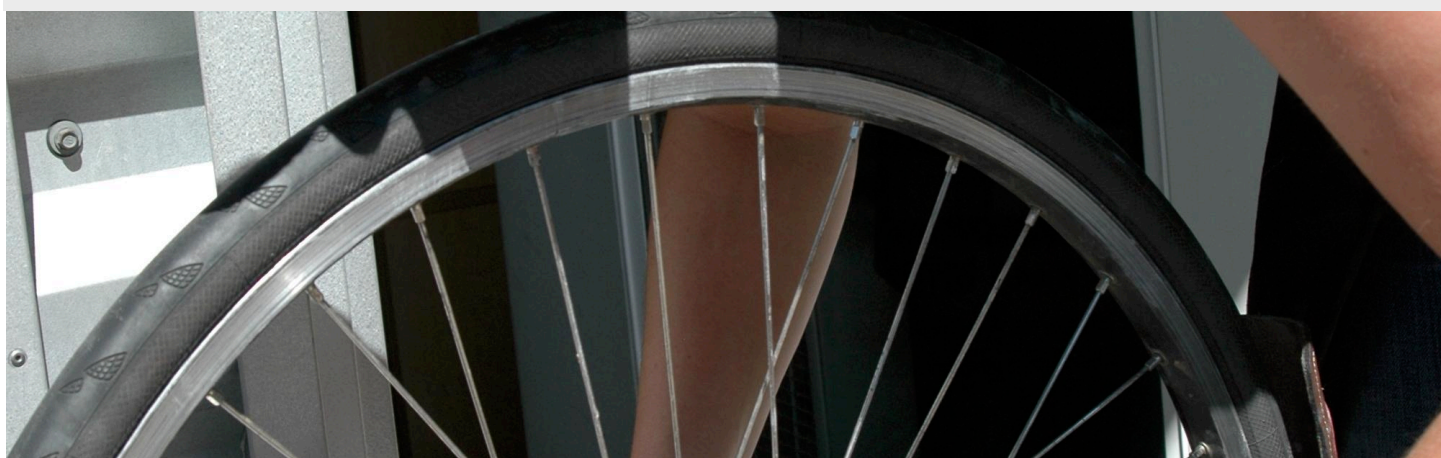


WOMEN CYCLING PROJECT



WHAT WOULD CAUSE YOU TO START OR INCREASE YOUR CYCLING?



WOMEN CYCLING PROJECT

BY ANDREA GARLAND

"It's great to roll up to a stop sign and find myself with a group of other riders, some of whom are gray haired women like me."-(Woman in her 60's from Vancouver, Canada)



Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals

Background

Why do fewer women than men use their bikes to get around in the United States (U.S.)? This was the question that the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycling Professionals (APBP) asked when they launched the Women Cycling Project in spring of 2010. APBP wanted to open a national dialogue about why the rate of women using their bikes for transportation in the U.S. is less than half that of men and what could be done to get more women of all ages riding in their community.

The idea for the project arose from discussions about the findings and recommendations of a group of U.S. experts who went to Europe the previous year to look at everyday bicycling over there. Kit Keller, Executive Director of APBP and member of the group said: "After seeing so many women cycling in

Copenhagen on the 2009 International Scan on Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety and Mobility¹, I began to wonder why we don't see more women cycling in cities in North America". APBP member Fionnuala Quinn made that question come alive through her volunteer work with APBP on the survey and free webinar." The APBP Women's Cycling Project team wanted to use the voices of women to suggest fresh ideas for policy makers, engineers, planners, public health and other professionals. As a first step, APBP conducted an on-line survey directed at U.S. women that asked lots of questions about bicycling. APBP quickly heard from over 13,000 women not only in the U.S., but also in many countries from all around the world. The APBP team wanted to hear from women and it turned out that they

wanted to tell us all about bicycling and their experiences and thoughts.

As well as asking specific questions about behaviors, the team asked for personal opinions about a whole range of bicycling issues. Thousands of separate comments were received from women of all ages expressing views about the joy of cycling as well as insights into their concerns. Three articles were prepared to look in more depth at some of the open-ended questions. In this article we will look at the responses received to the following question asked.

QUESTION

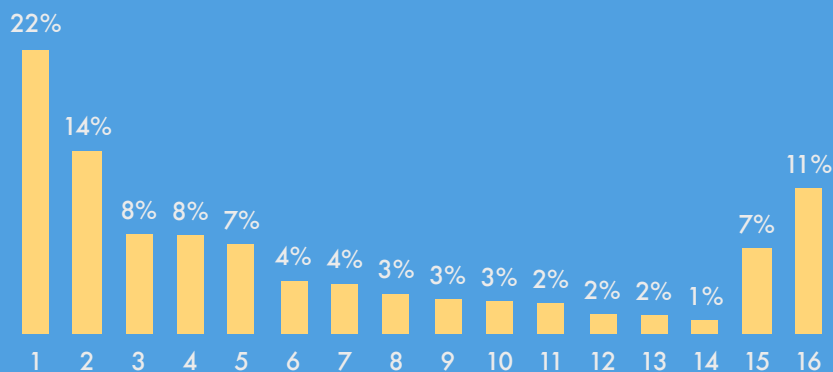
What would cause you to start or increase your cycling?

¹ Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO), National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) International Scan on Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety and Mobility

Figure 1: What would cause you to start or increase your cycling?

Open-ended response categories

1. Convenience
2. Infrastructure
3. Bike Friendly Place
4. Equipment
5. Education
6. Enforcement
7. Health
8. Kids
9. Public Transportation
10. Motorist Behavior
11. Social Support
12. Safety
13. Financial Incentives
14. Self Motivation
15. Other
16. I am Confident Cyclist



What would cause you to start or increase your cycling? (1,300 Responses)



We organized the 1,300 responses to this question into general categories of issues (see Figure 1). The factors we heard about the most

were convenience, infrastructure, equipment, and bicycle friendliness. Encouragingly, more than 10 percent of the women declared that they are already very confident cyclists who love riding their bikes every day and they don't need any extra motivation to cycle more.

"I ride a little over a hundred miles per week. To see more women of color would be a boost to my mileage because I will ENCOURAGE and RIDE with them!"
(Thirty-something - Atlanta, GA)

Convenience (Table 1)

In terms of convenience, about 22 percent said that they would cycle more if they had better weather, more time in the day, or shorter distances to their destinations. Women also specifically expressed interest in finding better local maps and mapping tools for planning their trips. Some wished for less traffic congestion and more cycling-friendly traffic laws especially when crossing intersections. Others discussed how they would like to see more affordable, fashion-cycling friendly clothing specifically designed for women as well

less 'goofy-looking' helmets that won't mess up their hair style.

"Bicycle Fashionistas: workshops on putting together a professional wardrobe appropriate for cycling." (30's - Portland, Oregon)

Infrastructure (Table 2)

Better bicycle infrastructure would encourage at least 14 percent of the respondents to ride more often. They highlighted the importance of having better engineering and planning design leading to improved bicycle accommodations. They also would like to see more investment in maintenance of the paths and bike lanes that are already there. Many women pointed out winter-weather issues stating that cleaning and plowing of bike lanes and shoulders are frequently neglected, impairing their ability to cycle when they want to.

A popular topic was the desire for exclusive bike ways, such as cycle tracks and bike trails. Hand-in-hand with the request for dedicated bike ways was the need for accessible, covered, and secured bike parking near workplaces and popular destinations.

"Traffic lights that can be tripped by the bicycle (not having to push the pedestrian button to get the light to change)"
(Forty-something - San Ramon, CA)

Table 1: Convenience 22% (292 Answers)

Subcategory	Count	%
Time	63	22%
Weather	60	21%
Distance	49	17%
Terrain	24	8%
Clothing	22	8%
Mapping Tools	22	8%
Helmets	9	3%
Bike Mechanics	7	2%
Congestion	5	2%
Traffic Laws	3	1%
Miscellaneous	28	10%

Table 2: Infrastructure 14% (187 Answers)

Subcategory	Count	%
Engineering/Planning	83	44%
Maintenance	49	26%
Bike Ways	26	14%
Bike Parking	25	13%
Bike Boulevards	4	2%



"Someone needs to invent a bike helmet that doesn't destroy your hair." (40's, Brooklyn, NY)

"Narrower lanes. Narrower lanes slow drivers down, not wider lanes." (30's Sacramento, CA)



“Women speak”

From Calgary, Canada - Age 40+

“There needs to be more bike culture: shops, streetscapes and cafes that provide lots of bike parking and cater to cyclist needs. Cycling should not be seen as an activity only for the young; if some older politicians and community/business leaders were visible cyclists it would encourage the general population. All downtown traffic speed limits should be no higher than 40km/h (25 mph). We need better connections from the off-road pathways to downtown destinations via on-street bike lanes.”

From Vancouver, WA - Age 30+

“I generally do not attend women only events because I am single and like to meet men. Singles cycling events in my area would be very nice to have.”

Port Townsend, WA - Age 70+

“Looking at this survey I realize there is no GOOD reason why I don't buy a bicycle and start using it! One with an electric 'assist' would be great for me to tackle the hills at my advancing years.”

From Portland, OR - Age 20+

“Oh my goodness, I don't think I could bicycle much more. I'm carfree already cycle for commuting, getting around town and social events. Tax breaks/financial incentives could cause me to purchase a new bicycle or trailer. I would appreciate bicycle maps that show where it is ILLEGAL to ride--many don't, they just steer bicyclists away from streets that ARE legal but might be unsavory to an inexperienced rider. I would like to see a campaign of easy-to-understand basics of cycling rules and safety on the road, i.e. - don't ride right next to the curb, or veer in and out of parked cars, follow traffic laws, & etc.”

Table 3: Bike Friendly Place 8% (102 Answers)

Subcategory	Count	%
Community	50	49%
Work	26	25%
Bike Shops	18	18%
Home	6	6%
School	2	2%



*“My employer allow us to bring our bicycles into the building and provides showers (thumbs up)! However, it is dangerous at the intersection that I take to get to the building”.
(30's Baltimore, MD)*

Bicycle-friendly Places (Table 3)

Women expressed considerable interest in finding bicycle-friendly places around their community, including schools, stores and bike shops. Many commented on the need to make bicycling more acceptable and safe for everyone in the community. Some said that the reason they already cycle is partially because their community encourages them through the availability of women-only bicycle workshops, rides, community events and safe infrastructure. These women would also like to see bicycle-friendly work places offering showers, lockers, and secure bike parking.

Many women feel intimidated by the know-it-all attitude of some bike shop workers. In fact, they said that finding a bike shop that caters to women leads them to cycle more because they then know where to find maintenance help or equipment information. Others spoke about the need for bike storage at home and at school.

“More information aimed at women that are trying to get back into it to be healthy or get in shape. I can stand in most bike shops and be ignored because the staff don't think a fat woman is there for a bike. They barely look at me, instead passing me by to speak to the fit girl that came in after me. There should be discussions on biking to be fit, heavier women and how to make biking comfortable for them. (Tire types and pressure, seats, short route recommendations, etc...) There are NO reflective jackets or biking clothes for women in plus sizes, I can't even fit into a mens reflective jacket. Everything is sized for people that are already in shape.” (Woman in her 40's from Troy, Michigan)

Other Reasons to Cycle More

When asked what would cause them to start or increase cycling, the remaining 45 percent of respondents mostly talked about equipment, education, health, kids, and social issues as well as safety and enforcement.

Many were very interested in acquiring better **equipment** (8 percent), maybe a new bike or a more comfortable saddle. The high cost of reliable equipment and gear was noted as an issue by many.



In regards to **education**, respondents (7 percent) expressed the need to educate drivers about how to share the road with cyclists while other suggestions revolved around bicycling education such as incorporation of bike safety into school-based driver education courses. Others wanted to find bicycle safety classes where they can learn how to be a confident rider on the road.

A smaller percent of the women discussed that improving police **enforcement** of traffic laws, for both drivers and cyclists, would increase ridership. A typical suggestion was that police departments should develop better guidelines to assist in the investigation of vehicle/bicycle crashes to better determine actual responsibility. Women cyclists also want to feel protected in terms of their rights to use the road and would like to see enforcement applied to cyclists who disobey traffic laws or act irresponsibly on the road. Of the 1,300 participants in the full survey, 88% of the women described themselves as law abiding cyclists.

A small percentage of women said that interest in better **health** encourages them to cycle to improve their level of fitness or as a preventive measure. Some won't yet consider cycling because they are currently out of shape or have existing health problems.

Three percent of the women would cycle more daily if they could find safe ways to carry their **children** to and from day care or if their children were old enough to ride a bike by themselves. If they were currently allowed to carry bicycles into the **public transportation** systems, three percent said that they would bicycle more regularly. Others said that they would increase their cycling if they saw better **motorist behavior** with more courteous drivers sharing the road and acting more carefully around riders. Many said that they appreciate having **social support** from friends and family or would like **financial incentives** from employers to cycle.



“Women speak”

From Richmond, VA - Age 30+

“Right now I only have an old road bike with clipless pedals that I sometimes use for exercise. What I REALLY want is a Dutch city bike which I can use to run errands and wear normal shoes/clothes. There are “hybrid” bikes or beach cruisers, but we need more bikes suitable for transportation (fenders, lights) and carrying things (baskets, panniers, etc) in our local bike stores. Also, I REALLY support bike paths in the suburbs. There is plenty of space beside most busy roads (45 MPH) where a separate path could be made. Families could ride together. We need an infrastructure that supports bicycle transportation; right now our infrastructure favors cars. Check out www.copenhagenize.com. I read it every day and drool over the bike culture.”

From Brooklyn, NY - Age 30+

“Bike shop employees have usually been pretty nice when I have a specific question. It just feels uncomfortable browsing in a store the first couple of times... Especially when trying out bikes. It was very difficult to answer the question, ‘how did that feel?’ because I had nothing to compare it to (other than memories of bike riding from 10+ years ago).”

From Flagstaff, AZ - Age 40+

“Despite the fact that sustainability is supposed to be a city priority, the top leadership do not participate in bike commuting and barely participate or support Bike to Work Week. They do not even participate in the tax incentive the federal government offers to employers to support employee bike commuting.”

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Disclosure:

The quotes included in this report were selected out of the responses from the open-ended answers to the survey. They are not associated with the people shown in any of the pictures used in this report.

Conclusion

Reading through well over a thousand comments from the participants is very encouraging. The women clearly raise so many different issues over a range of factors: cultural, design, societal, regulatory, enforcement, etc. We heard from a diverse range of women of all ages, sizes and abilities who are cycling on a daily basis. These women already really enjoy and love riding bikes for all sorts of activities.

After asking what would lead these women to cycle more, it seems that such factors as weather, distance and time are big influencers. Women told us that they would consider bicycling for transportation if better bike infrastructure was available. When these women find their workplaces, schools, and communities to be bicycle friendly, they feel encouraged to cycle more, especially if they are supported by a group of friends or family. They also told us that they would cycle more if they saw better safety education and law enforcement, could bring bikes onto public transportation, roads were safer, or they could receive financial incentives from work and had better equipment for riding.

The Women Cycling Project group is a project of the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP). APBP is a unique national and international association that brings together the knowledge and expertise of professionals in the discipline of pedestrian and bicycle transportation. APBP members are planners, engineers, architects, landscape architects, transportation researchers, suppliers, advocates, Safe Routes to School, trails and public health professionals. APBP members work at all levels of government, in consulting firms and with non-profit organizations. APBP offers resources and training for building sustainable transportation.

To find out more about this project, view resources and learn how to get connected with others interested in the topic of women bicycling, visit the APBP website at www.apbp.org.



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Expertise for sustainable
transportation

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