

Arkansas Revises State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to Become More Bike-Friendly

by: Leesa Freasier

SUMMARY

In 2012, the League of American Bicyclists ranked Arkansas 50th in the nation for bicycle-friendliness. In response, the governor of Arkansas requested that a technical advisory committee be formed to update the state's 14-year-old Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Members included the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) and Arkansas Department of Health (ADH). The plan now allows for better communication with communities, a more cohesive planning process, and a strategic approach to making environmental changes.



CHALLENGE

Each year, the League of American Bicyclists ranks all 50 states using a multifaceted Bicycle Friendly State Survey that is answered by each state's Department of Transportation. In 2012, Arkansas was in last place on the list. Although Arkansas developed a statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in 1998, it didn't address all of the pedestrian and bikeability elements of today.

Communities struggled to create local plans that tied into the state master

plan, and residents didn't always understand the need for complete street policies or that they would need approval from community leaders. Often, communication struggles between the AHTD and community resulted in multiple project redesigns. The process sometimes meant making many changes over the years.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

To view or download the Arkansas State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, visit <http://www.arkansasbikepedplan.com/>. To learn more about the ADH, visit <http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/Pages/default.aspx>. To learn more about the AHTD, visit <http://www.arkansashighways.com/>. This project is supported by the State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity, and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health cooperative agreement (DP13-1305).

"Although the network strategies were at a statewide scale, the focus of many of the policies were geared toward helping local communities become more accessible, healthy, and economically sustainable."

- Dave Roberts, vice president of planning at Crafton Tull in Little Rock

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SOLUTION

After the 2012 ranking, Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe formed the Arkansas Bicycle Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The Arkansas Highway Commission also adopted an order that authorized AHTD to update the 1998 state's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. TAC conducted 25 community meetings over a 3-month period and gathered information about the extent of bicycle and pedestrian activity, issues experienced by local cyclists and pedestrians, and the status of local bicycle and pedestrian plans. TAC then developed regional maps to identify high priority areas. This brought focus to needed changes for 16,000-plus miles of state highway.

RESULTS

Currently, ADH is helping more than 50 communities across Arkansas develop their local plans. ADH provides technical assistance regarding needs assessments, funds by AHTD for environmental changes, and templates for policy and design development. AHTD is now required to take the local plan into consideration when making improvements in the area. ADH and AHTD work more cohesively and communicate from the beginning phase of any project, so local funding is readily identified and used. Local communities and AHTD now develop design plans together. As a result of these changes, in 2015, Arkansas improved its ranking to 36 on the Bicycle Friendly State Ranking list.

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Contact CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/requestform.html>

Web site

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

ADH will continue to assist local communities to assess their environment and develop their own complete streets policies. Each community will receive educational materials and actionable items about possible environmental changes. Education topics include information about the economic and health benefits of multimodal transportation. ADH also provides example design principles that have been successful in states similar to Arkansas—such as Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Florida. Because each community has different priorities, social economic issues, and demographics, ADH adjusts the examples and information that is shared on the basis of what the community views as most important.

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