



2021 BPAC Annual Report

Urbana Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission



- Bill Brown—Chair, Council
- Cynthia Hoyle—Vice-chair, At-large
- Annie Adams - At-Large
- Kara Dudek - Urbana Park District
- Nancy Westcott - At-Large
- Susan Jones - At-Large
- Jeff Marino - At-Large
- Sarthak Prasad - University of Illinois
- Audrey Ishii - Urbana School District
- Shannon Beranek- City of Urbana



BPAC Background

BPAC was established in 2006 for the primary purpose of:

- Analyzing proposed bicycle routing
 - Operation and safety of bicycles
 - Recommendations on biking and walking facilities, Capital Improvement Plan and Bicycle Master Plan
 - Education and public outreach on bike and pedestrian issues
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- ◆ Urbana's first Bicycle Master Plan was adopted in 2008
 - ◆ Urbana received Bronze-level "Bicycle Friendly Community" status in 2010
 - ◆ Upgraded to Gold-level BFC in 2014
 - ◆ Latest update to Bicycle Master Plan approved in 2016
 - ◆ Re-evaluation in 2018 resulted in maintaining Gold-level BFC through 2022
 - ◆ Evaluated on Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Evaluation, and Equity
 - ◆ Urbana's first Pedestrian Master Plan was adopted in 2020, as well as a Bicycle Wayfinding Plan

Introduction

Urbana residents walk or ride bikes to get to work, school, or shopping in greater numbers than state or national averages. Considering commuting trips alone, census data shows approximately 15-20% of Urbana workers walk or bike to work, **about 5 times the national average.**

Nationally, commutes make up only 20% of all trips (by all modes). More than half of all trips are less than 3 miles – trips that could easily be accomplished by bike. Proximity to work, school, and shopping has a direct impact on people's transportation choice. Second to distance, lack of adequate infrastructure (sidewalks, safe bike routes) is the primary reason people cite for not riding or walking more frequently.

Active transportation has proven health benefits as well as benefits to local businesses. Walking and riding for transportation also saves people thousands of dollars each year in fuel, vehicle maintenance and parking costs. In addition, some households can go without a car or reduce the number of vehicles which saves additional money in car payments and insurance. People with the lowest 10% of income tend to spend more than 20% of their income on transportation. Providing safe options and encouraging active transportation complements mass transit and improves the stability and upward mobility of communities.

Vehicle transportation also has a societal cost. Only a fraction of the cost of road construction and maintenance is covered by gas taxes. Parking consumes valuable urban real estate and contributes to runoff and pollution of streams. Air pollution, greenhouse gas contribution to climate change, and societal costs of protecting global energy supplies are becoming more visible day by day. Encouraging active transportation builds resiliency and sustainability.

Through the vision of previous Mayors and City Councils, hard work by staff and with support from the community, Urbana has obtained gold-level recognition as a bicycle friendly community. We hope the new council appreciates the responsibility of the City to continue to provide safe and adequate infrastructure and programs. This report of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission summarizes some of the topics discussed and accomplishments during 2021.

Infrastructure Improvements

Although mostly complete in 2020, the Green Street **MCORE** (Multimodal Corridor Enhancement) project completed bike lane and crosswalk striping on the final phase from Lincoln Avenue to Race Street in the spring of 2021.

IDOT completed the **University Avenue Safety Improvement Project**, a \$9M overhaul of the corridor from Wright Street to Cunningham which included resurfacing as well as many new or improved sidewalks, new crosswalks, LED street lighting and modernized signals. The project also **reduced speed limits from 35 to 30 MPH**.

There had been several fatal pedestrian crashes here in recent years.



Speed Kills



As part of the reconstruction of the intersection of Vine & Washington, crosswalks and ramps were rebuilt and enhanced stop signs were installed with blinking LED lights. The Urbana Park District completed a new ½ mile multiuse loop path around Blair Park. Public works also makes continual progress bringing sidewalk ramps up to code as opportunities arise.

Planning

No new plans were approved or amended. The [2016 Bicycle Master Plan](#) is meant to be evaluated on a five-year basis, so it is overdue for evaluation. Staff was not available for this purpose, so BPAC worked with the UI Department of Urban and Regional Planning and MTD to create an unpaid internship for a student to at least

begin the evaluation.

Following a crash on East Main at Dewey Street that killed a pedestrian, in January BPAC reconsidered the options that were presented in the [Kickapoo Rail Trail Extension Study](#) approved by the City Council in 2020. Alternative 2 was one of several alternatives recommended for further evaluation in the study. BPAC considered anew the number of bus stops on East Main, the current lack of sidewalks or lighting, vehicle speeds, and the historically underserved nature of the neighborhood. It was agreed that although more expensive, Alternative 2, which involved adding a multiuse path along the south side of Main from Weaver Park to the existing trail, would provide more direct benefit to the immediate neighborhood as well as make an important connection to the Weaver Park trailhead, allowing eastbound users of the KRT to avoid crossing Main Street. In the long term, a sidewalk on the north side would also be needed, so BPAC approved the following recommendation to the City by motion:

“Implement short and long-term solutions for the East Main Street Corridor, including speed limit reduction, additional signage, street lighting, and recommending alternative 2 for the KRT connectivity with the addition of a sidewalk on the north-side of Main Street and safe crossing for bus stops.”

Chair Brown made a brief presentation to the City Council in February suggesting this alternative.

Equity & Quality of Life Projects

Recognizing disparities in the way that neighborhood infrastructure is often proposed and maintained, the City budgeted \$2M to address small-scale public infrastructure needs in underserved neighborhoods. City staff requested that BPAC help to advise the process for identification and selection of proposed projects. Administrator Mitten presented an overview of the project in September and with feedback from BPAC developed a simple project proposal form. In November, Communications Specialist Bridget Broihahn presented a communications plan for outreach to the community for project proposals. Additional input from BPAC contributed to the rollout and as of February 2022, more than 50 project proposals have been received by staff.

VISION ZERO

On October 26th, 2020, the City Council unanimously adopted [resolution 2020-09- 049R](#), setting as official policy the Vision Zero goal of reducing loss of life or serious injury on our transportation system to zero by 2030. The resolution also directs BPAC to establish a Vision Zero task force to develop a Vision Zero Plan for the City. In December 2021 Mayor Marlin sent invitations to potential community members to constitute the task force.

In October, **BPAC voted to ask the City Council to make implementation of Vision Zero a council goal.** Chair Brown composed and sent a letter to the Council on December 2, 2021 with this request as they began their goals discussions.

BPAC created a filtered view of police data available on the Urbana OpenData portal to show all [recent crashes with reported injuries or involving people walking or riding bikes](#), and made it publicly available. The view produces a table but if better records of location are provided, we hope in the future to be able to show these on a map. In 2021 in Urbana, there were 175 total crashes with injuries reported in preliminary data by the Urbana Police Department, 11 involving people riding bikes and 11 involving pedestrians. There were 2 fatalities: one a pedestrian and the other a driver.

Besides official crash data, it is also useful to obtain location data identifying weak infrastructure links where people do not feel safe or have experienced near-crashes. To that end, a student intern helped BPAC create a [Wikimap for Urbana Vision Zero](#). People are asked to share information about walking, biking, and driving in Urbana. The following questions are posed:

- Where do you walk and bike?
- Where would you like to walk and bike?
- Where and what are the barriers to walking and biking?
- What can we do to remove walking and biking barriers?
- Additional issues you have experienced and/or observe.

Other Topics Discussed and Recommendations

1. Budget for Sidewalk and Path Maintenance

SIDEWALK, PATHS IN CIP



The 2021 Capital Improvement Plan estimates that in order to provide a sustainable maintenance plan for the City’s sidewalks and paths, approximately \$500,000 is required annually for maintenance alone and another \$500,000 for replacement and improvement. While we realize that improvements are often tied to new capital projects, there is a backlog of maintenance as identified in the [Pedestrian Master Plan](#).

Current sidewalk maintenance is mostly responsive to complaints, which are more common from areas and people with access to public officials or who have come to expect quick response. An adequately funded systematic plan will reduce inequities in sidewalk maintenance and improvements based on need.

BPAC voted to recommend that the FY 2023 budget include at least \$250,000 for maintenance, up from the current \$120,000.

2. Increase Staff Support for BPAC

BPAC discussed how additional staff support could improve the City’s progress toward a more walkable and bike-friendly community. Currently, a staff member representing public works is required by ordinance to participate as a voting member of BPAC. In previous years dedicated staff support often included a member from Planning who also was the specialist for bike/pedestrian aspects of

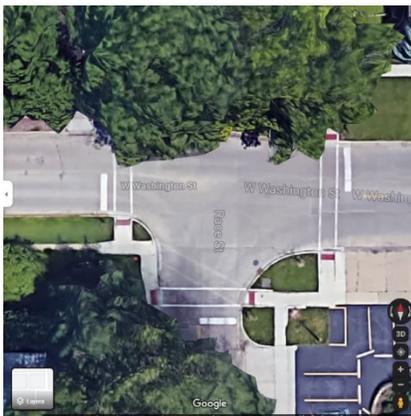
plan reviews. BPAC members noted that engineering is only one aspect of our work to improve walking and biking. A dedicated staff person could help coordinate educational campaigns, messaging, bike giveaways, bike share agreements, planning, grant writing, goal setting and evaluation, similar to other City Commissions such as the Sustainability and Arts & Culture Commissions. In December, **BPAC voted to request an increase in staff support for BPAC to support BPAC's work to create safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, which is important for a healthy, vibrant, and equitable community.**

3. Application to renew BFC Gold

Urbana is Illinois's first and so far only Gold-level Bicycle Friendly Community recognized by the [League of American Bicyclists](#), having first earned that award in 2014 and recertified in 2018. Communities are judged on Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Evaluation & Planning, and new this round, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion. The application is due to be resubmitted for another 4-year award later in 2022. In April, a student intern presented an overview of the recommendations from the 2018 feedback from the League that had yet to be implemented, including bike parking incentives to local businesses and hiring a Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator for the City.

4. Crosswalk at West leg of Washington & Race

A resident approached BPAC in September with concerns about pedestrian visibility at the corner of Race & Washington. The resident and Chair Brown put together a presentation for the September meeting illustrating the problem and a potential low cost treatment that might help.



BPAC voted to request that the Traffic Commission evaluate the crosswalk visibility at the corner of Washington Street and Race Street based upon the presentation given at the September 21, 2021 BPAC meeting. Chair Brown submitted [the request](#) and in December received a [letter from the Traffic Engineer](#) denying the request.

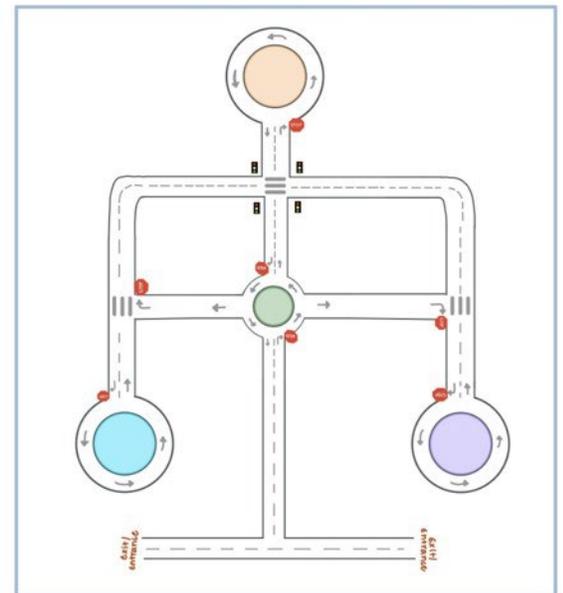
5. Three-foot Minimum Passing Signs

IDOT recently selected a Bicycle Passing Sign standard, R4-I102. Local advocacy organization Champaign County Bikes has a program where they provide free signs to jurisdictions that agree to install them. As a result, signs were installed last summer in Savoy, Mahomet, several rural townships and in county parks. With no progress in Urbana, in October BPAC reviewed in detail [13 possible locations](#) in Urbana suggested for placement by Champaign County Bikes. The traffic engineer stated that the request was still under review.



6. Traffic Gardens

Several UI Student Groups from the Community Health program presented variations on potential “traffic garden” treatments for Urbana locations. We had a presentation in May on potential use of the abandoned streets on the north part of Orchard Downs and in December two more presentations were made for Meadowbrook and King parks. Traffic gardens usually consist of pavement, striping and signage to provide realistic intersection configurations where young students can practice and understand how traffic interacts and how to safely navigate on a bicycle.



7. Snow removal on sidewalks

BPAC discussed the fact that the City Council in 2019 approved part of BPAC recommendations to change City Code to expand the downtown and University sidewalk districts that are required to be cleared of snow - and sent the remaining recommendations “back to committee” but had yet to address those.

8. Bike registration & stolen/found bikes

The City offers a voluntary free bicycle registration program through the Finance Department. Urbana's Animal Control officer previously had responsibility for collecting abandoned bicycles and checking them against a list of bicycles reported stolen, those registered, and providing information to the Bike Project or other groups that keep a list of bikes reported stolen so that the bike might be returned to the owner. They also helped coordinate an annual bicycle fix-up and giveaway to enable families to obtain free unclaimed bicycles in operating condition. With the loss of that position, residents were getting conflicting information about what to do with bicycles they find. Police [policy number 343](#) needs to be updated with the current procedures, and police service representatives need to be trained on those.

9. Pedestrian streets/slow streets/play streets – survey

BPAC had inquiries about the potential to partially close some streets to through traffic in order to create more space for outdoor walking and social interactions during the pandemic. City code [Art IV Sec 23-46](#) authorizes the city traffic engineer to declare “play streets” and place appropriate signage. BPAC members produced an informal survey distributed on social media and received 165 responses, with >58% saying they agree or strongly agree that the City should make some accommodations during the pandemic. Member Annie Adams researched information on many other communities which already had designated pedestrian streets and presented to BPAC. With limited capacity for city staff to implement a program, it was abandoned.

10. Design for visually impaired

Member Nancy Westcott brought to the attention of BPAC that there were some conflicts near some of the new bus stops on Green Street on campus where it was difficult for visually impaired individuals to detect the bike lanes that proceed around the bus stop. She also described the inconsistency in audio cues at intersections between the various jurisdictions. Along with Cynthia Hoyle, they presented suggestions to BPAC in December and agreed to make a similar presentation to CUUATS on behalf of BPAC.

11. Bike Parking Racks

Members of BPAC expressed concern that a number of bike racks owned by the City that were purchased with grant funding had been in storage for many years. Discussion included possible incentives or other provisions to provide the racks to businesses that don't have adequate bike parking. City staff made arrangements to provide the bike racks to the Urbana School District.

Acknowledgements

In Urbana, thousands of people ride bikes and walk daily for recreation, for exercise, to use transit and to get to work or buy groceries. BPAC works alongside numerous government bodies, businesses, advocacy organizations and clubs to help address the needs of the biking and walking public.

- Champaign County Bikes
- Prairie Cycle Club, Wild Card, Midwest Cyclists, and others
- People for Safe Streets
- CU Safe Routes to School
- Healthy Champaign County
- Champaign-Urbana Urbanized Area Transportation Study (CUUATS - RPC)
- The Bike Project of Urbana-Champaign
- Local Bike Shops
- Ride Illinois
- UI Facilities & Services, Campus Sustainability Council, student interns
- Urbana Park District
- Urbana School District 116
- CU MTD