



**Community
Cycling
Center**

Understanding Barriers to Bicycling Project

Final Report
JULY 2012

www.CommunityCyclingCenter.org

Introduction

Find this report online at: www.CommunityCyclingCenter.org

In June 2010, the Community Cycling Center published the ***Understanding Barriers to Bicycling Interim Report***, in which we detailed the methods and initial findings of the Understanding Barriers to Bicycling community needs assessment. In this ***Final Report***, we offer an update on our ongoing work, along with reflections on the path we have taken because of this project. It is our hope that by documenting and sharing our process – including the questions we asked, the assumptions we challenged, and the lessons we learned – we can engage in a broader conversation with other organizations working to make bicycling more accessible in their communities.

The Community Cycling Center, founded in 1994, is a nonprofit based in Northeast Portland, OR. Our **mission** is to broaden access to bicycling and its benefits. Our **vision** is to build a vibrant community where people of all backgrounds use bicycles to stay healthy and connected. We **believe** that the bicycle is a tool for empowerment and a vehicle for change.



Bikes for Kids participant at New Columbia, June 2011.
CREDIT: GREG RAISMAN

CONTACT US

OFFICE/MAILING ADDRESS:
3934 NE MLK Blvd., Suite 202
Portland, OR 97212
PHONE: 503-288-8864

VISIT US

BIKE SHOP:
1700 NE Alberta Street
Portland, OR
PHONE: 503-287-8786

About Us

THE INITIAL SHIFT

In 2008, following a strategic planning process, the Community Cycling Center refocused programs and partnerships from a metro-wide service area to a five-mile radius of our Northeast Portland bike shop. “This shift was about having an impact,” says Alison Graves, the Community Cycling Center’s Executive Director. As we concentrated our work in North and Northeast Portland, we reflected on how the neighborhoods had changed since 1994, when we launched the organization.

Since our founding, we focused on running a community bike shop and delivering hands-on bicycle programs to more than 10,000 people, contributing to Portland’s bicycle-friendliness. But when we talked with people of color in our neighborhood about bicycles, we heard a very different perspective. Bicycles were seen as a symbol of gentrification and yet another way the City had made a change the community did not want. Urban renewal support had literally changed the face of our neighborhood. According to an Oregonian article, “In 2000, census tracts along Alberta Street and nearby North Williams Avenue were 46% black and 30% white. Ten years later, the same areas were 26% black and 54% white¹.” Property values rose and many longtime neighbors could no longer afford their homes and moved away, many to East Portland.

We wondered who was, and who **was not**, benefitting from Portland’s vision of sustainability and bicycle-friendliness. As we scanned policy-making tables, bike shops, events, and programs, we found they did not reflect the diversity of Portland. This led us to ask bigger questions. Was there interest in bicycling within low-income communities and communities of color? If so, were there specific barriers that prevented people from riding? And what could the Community Cycling Center do to include low-income people and people of color in the vision of a bicycle-friendly Portland?

We had a lot of questions and we recognized that, in exploring the answers, we had the chance to uncover challenges and opportunities regarding bicycles from more diverse perspectives. This was the genesis of the Understanding Barriers to Bicycling Project.

1 Hannah-Jones, Nikole. (2011, May 6). In Portland’s heart, 2010 Census shows diversity dwindling. The Oregonian. Retrieved from http://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/index.ssf/2011/04/in_portlands_heart_diversity_dwindles.html

Getting Started

BUILDING THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

“Nobody we knew was building connections with communities underrepresented in planning and policy work,” notes Susan Remmers, the Community Cycling Center’s Executive Director from 2006 until early 2010.

The project sought to stretch the Community Cycling Center’s community engagement and impact. According to Remmers, “We felt we offered a new and untested vision and approach, seeking to connect community health and transportation dots.” As part of the process, we aimed to listen more than talk to better understand community issues.

We designed the project to increase the awareness and acceptability of bicycling as a transportation option among low-income individuals and people of color in North and Northeast Portland. We aimed to reach 250 influencers through 10 community organizations to be included in a culturally-appropriate needs assessment. The findings would influence the design of a culturally-specific pilot program.

This initiative represented a big shift. Until this point, we had focused our efforts on running a community bike shop and delivering hands-on bicycle programs. This project would require we understand community health frameworks and policy development processes. Both represented significant new territory for us. In addition, we were pushing the organization to grapple with cultural competence. While bicycle advocates often have good



Community Cycling Center staff, March 2009 . CREDIT: JOSH TILLINGHAST

intentions, the majority of bicycling organizations in Portland lack cultural competence and racial and class diversity. This lack of diversity means most discussions and decisions about bicycling issues have a limited perspective, which often excludes the concerns of many groups, including families or individuals living on low incomes and people of color.

To support our efforts, we engaged Kristin Lensen, a cultural competence consultant, to help us with our outreach, and Portland State University's Initiative for Bicycle and Pedestrian Innovation to assist us with the design of the assessment. We received a \$78,000, two-year grant from regional government agency, Metro. The project became a catalyst for a new organizational direction.

TIMELINE:

January - March 2009	Historical & literature reviews
March - July 2009	Initial conversations and assessment planning
August 2009	Community assessment part I: Surveys
October - November 2009	Community assessment part II: Focus Groups
December 2009 - February 2010	Analyze and summarize findings
March - April 2010	Dissemination of interim report
April - October 2010	Design and deliver pilot program
November 2010 - June 2011	Evaluate pilot
May 2011 - April 2012	Evaluate and update strategic plan and direction

Getting Started

RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEWS

To conduct the needs assessment, we had to educate ourselves. The project initially outlined a transportation literature review, but the conclusions drawn from that process did not reveal any substantive models to emulate. As a result, we added a community health literature review. We also collected articles and reports detailing the history of communities of color in Portland.

TRANSPORTATION REVIEW

The Transportation Review, completed by Alta Planning + Design, did not identify specific, proven strategies in marketing bicycle transportation to people with low-incomes, women, and minority communities. However, the study outlined several important barriers that prevent individuals from obtaining affordable, convenient transportation.

- Low-income households that don't own cars are still likely to make most of their trips by automobile. This indicates that people with low incomes carpool often, or are reliant on the use of vehicles borrowed from friends;
- Concerns about bicycle theft and the lack of secure parking facilities may prevent people from choosing to ride bicycles.

COMMUNITY HEALTH REVIEW

The Community Health review, conducted by a Portland State community health graduate student, looked at effective programs as well as challenges of reaching women, low-income, minority, and immigrant communities to address health issues. Significant guidance was gleaned from an obesity intervention study targeted to African American girls, which effectively utilized the following principles:

- Use of focus groups to identify and understand unique barriers to involvement for the specific population;
- Development and maintenance of a relationship of trust, openness, and honesty with the community;
- Employment of staff from the same ethnic background as participants;
- Development of culturally competent methods.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

While there are many communities of color in Portland, we focus on the African American community in this section, as there are well-documented examples of the impacts of transportation and community development projects, and a long history of disinvestment. In Professor Karen

Gibson's report, "Bleeding Albina," she details the story.² Beginning in the 1930s, redlining, predatory lending, and housing speculation policies and practices resulted in residential segregation and neighborhood disinvestment. Despite these practices, community resilience made the Albina neighborhood the black cultural center of Oregon in the late 1940s and 1950s. The area was full of small, black-owned businesses, and 57% of neighborhood residents owned their homes. Then the 1950s mega projects — construction of Interstate 5, Memorial Coliseum, and the expansion of Legacy Emanuel Hospital — resulted in the destruction of more than 1,000 housing units. In the early 1990s, low property values made way for urban renewal dollars resulting in an increase in property values, further displacement, and racial transition. Given this turbulent history, it's no wonder there is indifference and distrust when conversations turn to promoting and growing a bicycle movement in Portland.

OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE POLICY

In 2009, the City of Portland updated its bicycle master plan.

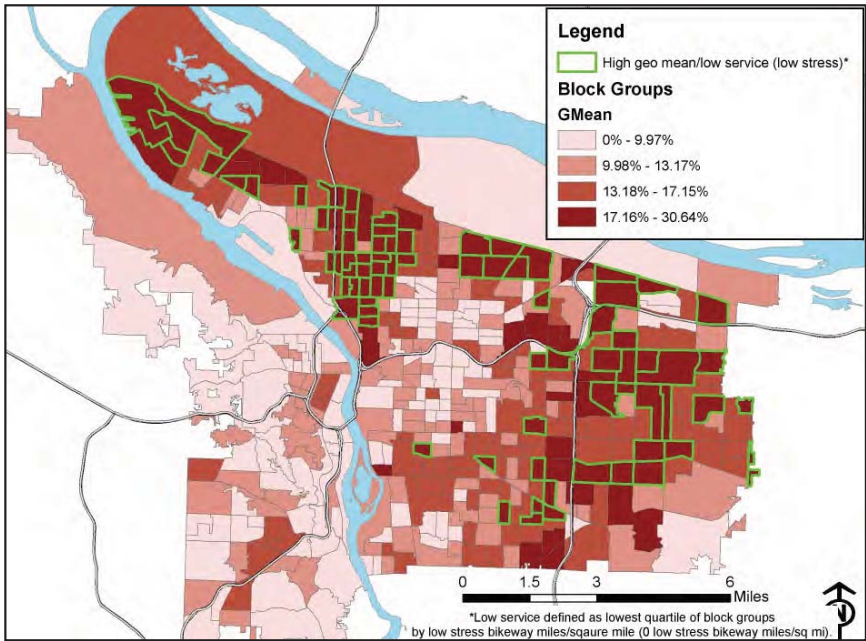
Former Executive Director, Remmers, and advisory board member, Wendy Rankin, joined the steering committee to advocate for equity as a stand-alone priority in the plan.

This commitment to equity is important because Portland aims to increase bicycle ridership from 10% today to 25% in 2030 — and to reach "all Portlanders." The demographics of Portland today are relatively diverse and twenty years from now are projected to be far more diverse. According to the 2010 report, ***Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile***, "Communities of color comprise 26.3% of the County's numbers."³ According to the regional governmental agency, Metro, the population of the Portland area is projected to increase by one million people in the next twenty years, with up to 60% of the new arrivals projected to be Latino/Hispanic. As this demographic shift occurs, an equitable plan will ensure that bicycle-related programs and investments are inclusive of historically disempowered communities of color.

2 Gibson, K. J. (2007), Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940-2000. *Transforming Anthropology*, 15: 3–25

3 Curry-Stevens, A., Cross-Hemmer, A., & Coalition of Communities of Color (2010). ***Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile***. Portland, OR: Portland State University.

Getting Started



Equity gap analysis of Portland's Bicycle Plan for 2030.

EQUITY GAP ANALYSIS SHOWS CORRELATION BETWEEN NETWORK AND DEMOGRAPHICS

As a result of the steering committee's successful efforts, the Bicycle Plan for 2030 included equity as one of the criteria for future projects, noting that "equity in active transportation is an important measure in creating a sustainable city."⁴

Alison Graves and Kathryn Sofich, 2012 board chair, sat on the Health, Equity and Bicycles work group and

advocated for an analysis of the plan's bikeway distribution relative to demographics. The resulting analysis revealed the bicycle network was weakest where the highest percentages of people of color reside. North, Northeast, and East Portland were highlighted as areas with limited safe places to ride bicycles in relation to the rest of Portland.

This analysis can be performed on an ongoing basis to evaluate progress of implementation.

4 Bicycle Plan for 2030

Forming Partnerships

PARTNERSHIP SELECTION

From March through July 2009, we held more than 70 meetings with a range of influencers and leaders in North and Northeast Portland to help us identify partner organizations.

As a result of this effort, we narrowed our partner criteria to:

1. Located roughly within a five-mile radius of our bike shop;
2. Represent one of the anchors of daily life: where people live, work, pray, or play;
3. Demonstrate readiness and willingness for partnership;
4. Commit to improve health with bicycles.

We found that common ground with two affordable housing providers, Hacienda Community Development Corporation's Clara Vista property in Northeast Portland, and New Columbia, a Home Forward site located in North Portland. Both organizations work with a very diverse population of residents and saw opportunities to address community health issues using the bicycle as a vehicle for change. That summer, we signed Memoranda of Understanding with both partners, outlining our shared goals and commitments.

We originally planned to establish 10 partnerships to reach 250 individuals. We scaled back because we realized we could reach our goal with two partners. We also underestimated the time each partnership required. Building relationships, developing goals, and coordinating activities followed very different paths with each partnership and community, an important lesson we would learn time and again in the coming months.

Forming Partnerships



Children at Bikes for Kids at Hacienda, May 2010.
CREDIT: DAN SLOAN

HACIENDA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Hacienda Community Development Corporation's mission is to build dignified, affordable housing for Latino and other immigrant families in the Portland area. Since 1992, Hacienda has developed 400 units. These units have 1,800 residents, of whom half are children. 85% of Hacienda's tenants are Latino, 10% are Somali.

Hacienda staff saw the Understanding Barriers to Bicycling Project as an opportunity to reduce the sense of social isolation among residents. Tanya Wolfersperger, Hacienda's former Director of Family Support Services, was enthusiastic about "addressing the social determinants of access, social connections, and affordability," and saw bicycle-based programming as a way "to connect residents to fun events and each other."



Bike Committee at Hacienda. CREDIT: STAFF

NEW COLUMBIA

New Columbia is a HOPE VI revitalized community situated on 82 acres of land in North Portland.

This mixed-income community, part of Home Forward, is the largest neighborhood revitalization project ever undertaken in Oregon's history. Today, New Columbia is home to 850 households, of which 232 are homeowners and 618 are renters. The community includes more than 2,500 adults and children, with 11 languages spoken among families representing 22 countries.

New Columbia's initial goal was to increase physical activity and provide positive outlets for families within their community. Leslie Esinga, who at the time was a Community Builder at New Columbia and was responsible for keeping residents and neighbors informed and engaged, says the neighborhood was facing a "crisis of inactivity." She saw our partnership as "an opportunity to work to identify solutions that address these community health issues."



Sunday Parkways at New Columbia. CREDIT: LUCAS BALZER

Methods

PRELIMINARY SURVEYS

In August 2009, we initiated community surveys to gather input to frame questions for focus groups. We set up an information table and provided bicycle safety demonstration materials at six neighborhood events in North and Northeast Portland, including Hacienda and New Columbia. We offered a one-hour training for staff and volunteers to collect survey data.

Our approach was to walk among the crowds, introduce ourselves, and seek participants willing to be interviewed. At our first event, we learned a key lesson about language as we introduced ourselves by asking, “Are you a bicyclist?” The most common response was, “Oh no. I’m not a bicyclist. I just ride my bike.” At future events we simply asked, “Do you ride a bike?”

As participants answered questions, staff and volunteers completed surveys. This approach overcame any literacy and language barriers, developed a conversational approach, and gathered additional information, perspectives, and ideas from survey participants. We offered helmets or lights as incentives to everyone who completed the survey. We collected a total of 148 responses.

What we learned was that respondents used all modes of travel to get around: cars, bikes, buses, and feet. No travel method was predominant, although car use was the highest of the modes used. We found that 67% of men and 45% of women rode bikes. Slightly more than half of those surveyed (52%) rode a bike for short, local trips, including running errands, visiting friends, and for exercise and recreation. Participants said they would ride or ride more often if key barriers to bicycling were reduced.

Following the survey, we organized comments by theme: cost of purchasing and maintaining a bicycle; interest in riding with a group but not knowing how to find a group; lack of information about getting around safely, and concerns about safety on streets (either because of cars or lack of neighborhood safety); and lack of secure bicycle storage. Our next step would be to hold focus groups and explore the themes.

FOCUS GROUPS

In the fall of 2009, we conducted five focus groups with Latino, African immigrant, and African American audiences. At each session, we provided interpretation, child care, and culturally-specific foods. A total of 49 community members participated. 45% of participants were Latino, 36% were African immigrant, 15% were African American, and 4% were multi-racial or Caucasian.

When signing in, participants received a name tag and a series of stickers. Each sticker was coded with a number matched to the participant's survey so we could later identify the gender and demographic information for each individual. After a period of socializing, staff welcomed participants, launched a round of introductions, and provided a brief overview of the Community Cycling Center and

the purpose of the focus group. The facilitator directed the group to a series of display boards depicting the themes that had emerged from the literature reviews, community meetings, and surveys.

The display board topics were organized into three main categories. Within each category, subtopics were listed in both image and text and presented on flip chart paper. The text is summarized below.

Participants were asked to place their stickers next to the text that represented their barriers to bicycling. If a concern was not listed, the facilitator added it.

After the group had indicated its priorities, the staff initiated a discussion to better understand their interests and concerns. As the group members clarified their points, recorders noted their comments on flip chart paper.

Focus Group Prioritization Charts – Barriers to Bicycling

Interest in Bicycling	Safety	Cost
I want to ride with my children	I don't like riding on streets with cars	I don't have a bike – it costs too much
I want to ride with a group	I don't know safe routes	My bike is broken
I don't know how to ride	I don't feel safe in my neighborhood	
I don't speak English	I don't have a safe place to put my bike	

Findings

While the groups differed somewhat in their perceptions of bicycling based on their cultural background and country of origin, they were remarkably similar in their interest in bicycling and the key issues that deter them from owning and riding a bicycle.

Our findings, while they have had a significant impact on our ongoing work, solely captured the barriers and recommendations expressed by the participants in our assessment.

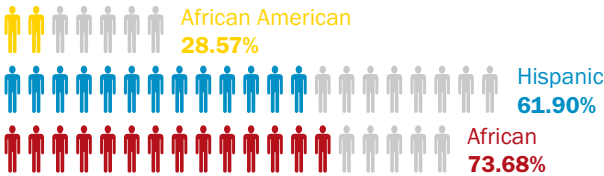
They are not intended to be exhaustive or representative of Portland as a whole. Our findings were both promising and troubling. On the positive side, the majority of people we spoke with, from all backgrounds, had a bicycle and rode it regularly. The predominant purpose of owning a bicycle was to promote health, primarily individual physical health, but also to build social connections and access community resources.

COST

It is important to remember that the people we interviewed are living on very low incomes. The most commonly noted barrier was costs associated with bicycle ownership. 60% of participants shared that the cost of purchasing a bicycle was a major obstacle, and 25% of respondents expressed concerns with the cost of bicycle maintenance.

Cost

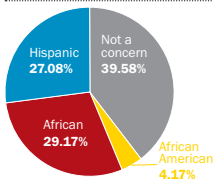
I don't have a bike: they cost too much



"Sometimes having a bicycle doesn't help the parents because it costs a lot to get them repaired."

Total Group

60.42% Concerned
39.58% Not a concern



Focus Group Comments

- Bikes are expensive ● ● ●
- Don't know how to repair ● ● ●
- Don't know where to take bikes for repair ● ●
- Repairs are expensive ● ●
- Unaware of resources for low cost repairs and tool use ●

Findings

RIDING

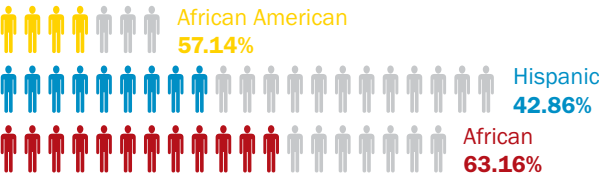
More than 50% of respondents talked about their interest in riding with a group; some preferred to ride with groups familiar to them while others preferred to meet new people. Similarly, nearly half of survey participants were interested in riding with their children.

Most discussed a desire to better understand the rules of the road, bicyclist rights and responsibilities, and legal liability. Latino/Hispanic participants mentioned the topic of access to information related to concerns about safety, specifically the fear of racial profiling by the police.

33% of the Latina and Somali women participants expressed interest in learning how to ride a bicycle so that they could bike with their children.

Riding

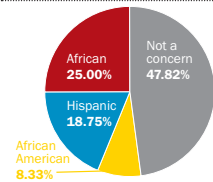
I would like to ride with a group



“I would like to learn with a group of women like me.”

Total Group

52.08% Concerned
47.82% Not a concern



Focus Group Comments

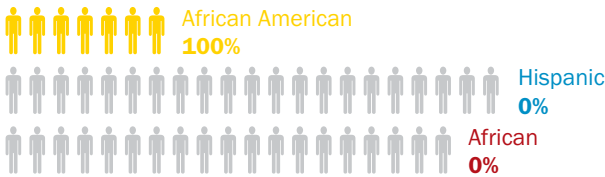
- Difficult to do with children: ● ●
- Fear of falling: ● ●
- Fear of the police: ● ●
- Lack of knowledge about laws, rights: ● ●
- Lack of knowledge about safe routes: ● ●

SAFETY

Aspects of safety were as varied and diverse as the participants. 100% of the African American participants were concerned that drivers would be hostile to them while riding a bicycle. As people who drive cars themselves, many participants felt that people riding bicycles were unpredictable. Respondents said they were unsure and often frustrated with how to respond to people on bicycles swerving on the road. 43% of the Latino/Hispanic respondents were concerned about being pulled over by the police.

Safety

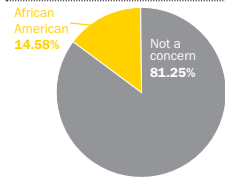
Drivers are going to be hostile toward me



"I don't feel well informed about the rules of the road and the rights of bicyclists. I am not sure where to go to learn bike laws?"

Total Group

14.58% Concerned
85.42% Not a concern



Focus Group Comments

- Fear of danger from moving vehicles ● ● ●
- Don't know how to put helmets on correctly ● ●
- Have questions about laws and insurance ● ●
- Don't know how to avoid trouble spots on bike ●

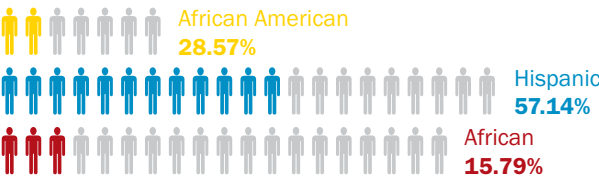
Findings

SAFETY

The only safety-related theme that all groups identified with was having enough space to store their bicycles securely. Many participants expressed concern about guarding bicycles from theft. They noted a lack of safe places to store bicycles, especially in residential complexes and at destination locations, such as schools.

Safety

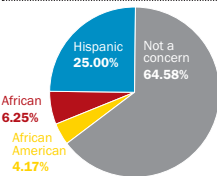
I don't have safe bike storage



"We could not leave our bikes out on the patio where there is room because they would get stolen."

Total Group

35.42% Concerned
64.58% Not a concern



Focus Group Comments

- Fear of danger from moving vehicles ● ● ●
- Don't know how to put helmets on correctly ● ●
- Have questions about laws and insurance ● ●
- Don't know how to avoid trouble spots on bike ●

CULTURAL BIASES AND BARRIERS

The cultural biases regarding bicycles and bicycling were varied and were not the primary focus of this needs assessment. However, biases came up during both surveys and focus groups. We considered biases a theme if they were noted by more than one person.

Common themes among African Americans

- Bicycles are perceived as toys for children, “Bikes are for kids. Once you get beyond kids’ age, you don’t ride a bike. It’s not even something we talk about for adults.”
- Bicycles were also associated with drug dealers. “In the 1990s bicycles came in our neighborhood with drug dealers.”
- Bicycles are viewed as a symbol of gentrification. “All of a sudden these bike lanes popped up and all these riders popped up. I used to drive down Vancouver Ave. and there were two lanes. Then one day there was a bike lane and all these bikers. Where did they come from?”

Common themes among Immigrants

- Latino/Hispanic and African immigrants noted that riding a bike is intimidating in a new place. “We may not ride in the U.S. because we are not comfortable in a new place.”
- Many immigrants noted a fear of deportation. “I rode my bike in Mexico, but here I don’t. I knew a man here in Portland that was stopped by the police on his bike and was deported.”
- Some never learned to ride. “No one ever taught me to ride. I’d like to ride to save money. In Somalia it is not the custom to teach girls to ride a bike.”

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Institutional racism, which is the existence of policies, practices and structures that place non-white groups at a disadvantage, was raised during the course of our conversations.

- Bike shops, themselves, can be barriers. At a Portland bike shop a Latino man was about to test ride a bicycle for his first triathlon. He asked the salesperson whether it was a legal requirement to wear a helmet. The salesperson responded, “If you are pulled over by the police and they ask you for your license, you could be deported.”
- Culturally specific events are not well developed. “If there were more races or rides in our neighborhood — like a ‘hood to ‘hood — instead of Hood to Coast.”

Shifting Gears & Exploring New Directions

INITIAL REFLECTIONS

Bicycling advocates frequently discuss bicycles as a simple solution to complex problems, and we agree. But we also found that broadening access to bicycling is a simple problem with a complex solution. The barriers to bicycling are not monolithic. But removing one barrier often results in the creation of another.

Through our research and focus groups, we gained some insight into the barriers to bicycling faced by low-income communities and people of color. Above all, we learned that obtaining a general survey would be impossible. While there were common barriers, there were also unique stigmas, challenges, and historical realities between culturally-specific groups.

We also realized a one-size-fits-all approach to our partnerships was not possible. The issues raised at New Columbia, which focused around building community, were different from Hacienda, which focused on secure bike storage. Organizationally, it was difficult to manage the range of projects and process with our partners. But we also knew we wanted to continue the work; we felt we were very early in the process. We secured funding from the Kaiser Permanente Community Fund administered by the Northwest Health Foundation in March 2010. This enabled us to continue working with both partners to pursue longer-term goals.

We realized a one-size-fits-all approach to our partnerships was not possible.

MODIFIED PROGRAMS: BIKES FOR KIDS

We learned from our focus groups that many families could not afford bicycles for their kids.

So in the summer of 2010, we piloted Bikes for Kids at Hacienda and New Columbia. A modification of an existing program, Bikes for Kids provided children, ages 3–8, with new helmets and refurbished bicycles. At each event, we set up a series of hands-on safety education stations, lined up dozens of bikes the kids could choose from, and set up a “bike rodeo” where they could practice riding safely. We held the program in central locations in each community, so kids felt comfortable, and we also worked with partner staff to sign up volunteers from the neighborhood – familiar faces were an important part of the experience.

Shifting Gears & Exploring New Directions

Between the two events, 142 children rode away on refurbished bicycles. Gram Shipley, Community Cycling Center mechanic, says: “It was awesome to be able to see the kids ride around, sharing the experience with their friends, peers, families, and neighbors all at once.”

Shortly after the event, though, we fully realized the complexity of barriers to bicycling. Families in both communities had difficulty finding places to store their bicycles. Many people kept bicycles on their porches, in violation of housing policies. Several families needed to leave bicycles outside, often unlocked, resulting in stolen bicycles. And when tires went flat or

chains dropped from the sprockets, there was no access to repairs.

We realized we could not limit our work to program solutions only. We had to understand how to influence policy changes. In doing so, we wanted to create a bridge between community members and policy-makers, which was an approach already encouraged and explored by a local Healthy Eating, Active Living project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Kaiser Permanente Community Fund at the Northwest Health Foundation. So, we created a community forum called Bikes for All to attempt to build this bridge.



Children receive their first bicycles at a Bikes for Kids event at Hacienda, May 2010.
CREDIT: JOEL SCHNEIER

INFLUENCING POLICY: BIKES FOR ALL

In August 2010, we held Bikes for All, a community conversation in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Transportation and OPAL Environmental Justice. Our goal was to invite community members, program providers, and policy makers so we could build a bicycle network that truly benefitted all Portlanders.

“In Portland, it’s all about relationships, and for years those involved with bicycle planning, advocacy, and education, did not include communities of color in the process,” Graves explains. “By holding a conversation that invited community members, program providers, planners, and politicians, we created the opportunity for conversations, questions, and relationship-building.”

Feedback from resident leaders at this forum opened up new

channels of communication with residents from New Columbia.

“Within the first five minutes, it proved worthwhile,” says Graves. A New Columbia resident, Charles Robertson, asked to show the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) the need for safer places to ride in North Portland, “I want to ride with you to show you what it is like to ride a bicycle from our perspective.” Greg Raisman, a PBOT traffic safety coordinator, accepted the offer. After two rides, Greg redesigned an upcoming route, the North Portland Connector Neighborhood Greenway, to address Charles’ concerns. The new greenway enhances safe routes to eight schools, improves walking and biking access to parks, and provides access to the Peninsula Crossing Trail.

At Bikes for All, we learned that leveraging relationships to foster action-oriented connections is relatively simple and incredibly powerful.



Community members participate in Bikes for All conversation, August 2010.
CREDIT: BEN LATTERELL

Shifting Gears & Exploring New Directions

CLUSTERING PROGRAMS

In our focus groups, many people expressed interest in learning to ride safely with their families. In early 2010, we began clustering our programs at our partner sites. We thought if we could do more to support families, we would help build a stronger community of riders.

Between Hacienda and New Columbia, we held six Create a Commuter workshops, through which 77 adults earned fully-outfitted commuter bicycles, and 11 Bike Clubs, where 102 elementary-age kids earned bikes to ride to school.

To build on this momentum, we organized outreach events at both Hacienda and New Columbia.

Skilled volunteers repaired bicycles, fit helmets, and taught youth and adults how to change flats and understand how to keep their bicycles in good working order.

We were able to empower hundreds of people. Every time we set up our tool kits and stands, we were overwhelmed with demand for repairs because there was not reliable access to bike repair in these communities. We realized that a more permanent solution needed to shift toward more of a capacity-building model. This meant building the skills and knowledge of community members to be able to create a sustainable solution.



Create a Commuter participants earn fully-outfitted commuter bicycles, January 2011.
CREDIT: SAM LEE

Building Capacity

OUR CULTURAL COMPETENCE

As we moved beyond direct service delivery and toward community change, we came to realize that understanding barriers was only part of the work.

We knew we needed help to become a more diverse, inclusive, and effective organization, and in 2010, we started the process by forming an equity committee and participating in the Center for Diversity and the Environment's (CDE) Environment, Health and Equity program. The CDE program provided specific feedback, trainings, and support and started by performing a comprehensive equity audit of our organization. They then followed up with specific recommendations for improving our organizational cultural competence.

The equity audit provided a comprehensive set of recommendations, ranging from hiring practices, culture building, physical space design, and board development. The findings advanced the work of the equity committee, which then developed a three-year plan to provide trainings to increase organizational cultural competence, revised our bike shop's layout and signage to create a more welcoming environment, and continues to evaluate our policies and procedures to ensure our organization is equitable and inclusive.

ORGANIZING BIKE COMMITTEES WITH PARTNERS

As our work progressed, community champions at each partner site emerged, eager to take additional steps forward. We helped organize resident bike committees at Hacienda and New Columbia. Bike committees were not a direct audit outcome, but certainly influenced by a finding that said we need to directly include the communities impacted by our work in the creation of a program or project. Each group began meeting monthly to organize bicycle-related activities, guide our collaborative work, and weigh in on larger bicycle transportation projects in their neighborhoods.

Building Capacity

BIKE COMMITTEE AT HACIENDA

At Hacienda, a group of residents were eager to promote bicycling, so they formed a group called Andando en Bicicletas en Cully, or ABC. They began by identifying inadequate bicycle storage as a key issue and committee members began their work with a PhotoVoice project that documented their barriers to physical activity, including inadequate bicycle storage. This project was supported through the Healthy Kids Healthy Communities project, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in coordination with the Oregon Public Health Institute.

The committee also determined that building knowledge about basic bicycle maintenance and

repair skills would promote the use of bicycles. In late 2011, ABC applied for and received a grant for a program through which Community Cycling Center staff trained ABC members to teach a series of basic bicycle maintenance workshops to other residents in the summer of 2012.

Claudia Gonzalez has been an active and enthusiastic member of ABC, and she says that when the project began, she “didn’t think there would be so many people interested in bicycles.” But now, “many people have benefited. When you look at the kids’ faces, they are so happy. And the adults are excited to begin riding a bicycle again, because many of us haven’t ridden since we were kids.”



Members of Andando en Bicicletas en Cully (ABC) gather at Hacienda. CREDIT: LAURA KOCH

BIKE COMMITTEE AT NEW COLUMBIA

New Columbia also organized a bike committee. Residents Egbevado Ananouko and Charles Robertson formed a group called We All Can Ride in the summer of 2010, after earning bikes in our Create a Commuter program.

They identified the need for trainings that would equip community leaders to lead rides and maintenance clinics. Committee members were also enthusiastic about finding a dedicated space for these activities.

The group was thrilled when, in late 2011, Home Forward approached us

about revitalizing a vacant lot at New Columbia into a safe space dedicated to kids riding their bikes. We received initial funding from Bikes Belong and the Bike Gallery, and will be working with We All Can Ride members to develop and manage a bicycle skills park and community repair space in 2012 that will promote bicycling skills and physical activity for children and families.

“There are so many bikes at New Columbia in need of basic repair, but we haven’t had the skills or tools,” says Ananouko. “We are excited to train community members how to fix bikes and have a place to store tools.”



Bicycle repair station at New Columbia. CREDIT: JOEL SCHNEIER

Building Capacity

INFLUENCING POLICY

While we were designing new programs and changing organizational culture by developing our cultural competence, we recognized that we also needed to define our role and approach for influencing policymaking in Portland. We developed a concept called “collaborative advocacy,” which described the idea of being a bridge between community members and policymakers.

We needed to better understand the policymaking landscape, which ranged from transportation policy to community health to land-use policy. At the same time we were working on how to connect the fledgling bike committees to become engaged with policymaking. We received a grant from the Bullitt Foundation in 2011 to support the bike committees and broaden their impact, to further develop our policy-level influence.

We decided to hone in on key opportunities that best leveraged our current knowledge and capacity, while helping us determine future positioning and opportunities. Several staff members from the Community Cycling Center joined the following groups in Portland:

- In 2010, we established the Equity in Active Transportation group, coordinating multi-agency programs and outreach at New Columbia and Hacienda.
- In 2010, we joined the Transportation Health Equity Network to build relationships and identify opportunities for including equity in the transportation planning process.
- In 2011, our Executive Director joined Portland’s Bicycle Advisory Committee to promote equity in bicycle planning.

A New Direction

In 2011, which marked the end of the two-year time period, we had accomplished our initial goals. But in so many ways, we felt that we were only just beginning.

The project started with questions. Two years later, we began to answer those questions and encountered many more. How could we support and sustain the energy in the bike committees at Hacienda and New Columbia? What would be our organization's baseline for cultural competence? How could we best position ourselves to influence broader conversations about equity in Portland?

The project was wrapping up just as we were preparing to update our organizational strategic plan, and it seemed like the perfect opportunity to gather what we had learned and think about how it could truly transform our work. We had arrived at the following conclusions:

- The benefits and burdens of bicycling in Portland are not shared equitably.
- Dominant-culture organizations have an incredible opportunity to reach more people and be more effective by increasing their cultural competence.
- The change we'd like to see is the development of more inclusive bicycle programs, shops, services, and decision-making.

With these lessons in mind, we drafted a new, three-year strategic plan, to be implemented beginning in 2013. The plan will demonstrate how, in the coming years, we will transform the Community Cycling Center to fully move beyond direct service and become a catalyst for community change.

Final Reflection

We acknowledge that we still have much to learn. And we embrace the opportunity to share our story.

We conclude all of our programs, volunteer projects, and events by inviting participants to reflect on something they learned or to share a future hope. In that spirit, we want to leave you with reflections from our staff and partners on the Understanding Barriers to Bicycling Project and their dreams and visions for the years to come.

Egbevado Ananouko, We All Can Ride leader, New Columbia:

“If we get [the skills park and repair space] to be successful, we will generate a lot of income, especially now that Portland has become a popular bike city. I also see an opportunity for the community to own something, if the process of We All Can Ride goes well in terms of community governing.”

Claudia Gonzalez, Andando en Bicicletas en Cully,

Hacienda: “I’d like to see more spaces where we can put our bicycles, so that we can all have bicycles in good condition and in a safe place.”

Alison Graves, Executive Director, Community Cycling

Center: “I’m excited to tell the stories of the amazing work being done through creative and committed community-based leadership to design solutions to the barriers to bicycling.”

Laura Koch, former Program Director, Community Cycling

Center: “I am excited to see us create opportunities for middle and high school youth to get involved and inspired with bicycles. We have an opportunity to work with future community leaders and provide them with experiences and skills that will shape their life path.”

Susan Remmers, former Executive Director, Community

Cycling Center: “It’s my hope the Community Cycling Center will embrace the inevitable unknowns along the way as this is often where innovation and change take hold.”

Gram Shipley, Used Inventory Coordinator, Community

Cycling Center: “I hope this can sway those that make transportation policy to aid areas that have traditionally been neglected.”

Tanya Wolfersperger, former Director of Youth & Family Support Programs, Hacienda CDC:

“I have been delighted at the level of commitment and partnership that everyone at the Community Cycling Center has brought to the community. I think we are on the verge of breaking through some of the barriers that our original project identified [and] I am hopeful that we are setting the stage to bring in continued resources that sustain our efforts.”

Acknowledgments

The Community Cycling Center deeply appreciates the contributions of resident leaders, partner organization staff, volunteers, and consultants who participated in the Understanding Barriers to Bicycling Project.

We All Can Ride	Egbevado Ananouko, Charles Robertson, Yvette Maranowski, Linda Dougherty, Michelle Hanna, Medina Negatu, E. Wasongolo
Andando en Bicicletas en Cully	Flor Yeni Ortega Marquez, Lourdes Montes, Marta Escobedo Marston, Wendy Yah Canul, Rafael Bautista, Yoni Peraza-Ku, Marlene Canche Uc, Susana Cervantes, Claudia Gonzalez, Maria de los Angeles Ku Kancab, Deysi Garcia
Tanya Wolfersperger	Former Director of Family Support Services at Hacienda Community Development Corporation
Muna Farah, Anna Gordon, Ruví Zamora, and Ruben Santiago	After School Program Staff at Hacienda
Leslie Esinga	Former Community Builder at New Columbia
Nazareth Gazai	Resident Services Coordinator at New Columbia
Amber Baker	Executive Director at Village Gardens
Jason Skipton	Community Programs Supervisor at Village Gardens
John Keating	Program Director – Strategic Partnerships at Home Forward
Alta Planning + Design	Transportation Literature Review
Staci Wolfe	MPH candidate/volunteer – Health Literature Review
Initiative for Bicycle and Pedestrian Innovation	Data analysis
Kristin Lensen Consulting	Cultural competence consultation

We thank Metro, the Bullitt Foundation, the Kaiser Permanente Community Fund at Northwest Health Foundation, the Oregon Public Health Institute, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Bike Gallery, and Bikes Belong for their investment in this important work.



**Community
Cycling
Center**

3934 NE MLK Blvd., Suite 202
Portland, OR 97212

www.CommunityCyclingCenter.org