

**CITY OF MERCED**  
**Planning Department**

TO: Bicycle Advisory Commission  
FROM: Bill King, Principal Planner  
DATE: December 13, 2016  
SUBJECT: 2017 Strategic Work Plan

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**BACKGROUND**

At the October 2016, Bicycle Advisory Commission (BAC) meeting, under the agenda item, “2017 Strategic Work Plan,” the BAC identified and discussed several items of importance to them, including:

**BAC Actions**

- emphasis to engage and partner with schools as it relates to increasing opportunities for bike safety education, concentrating on grades 3, 4, and 5.

**Shared Actions (BAC & Staff)**

- interest to improve and increase communication with Engineering Staff;
- interest to continue the efforts for the (BAC) to dialog with City Department heads; and
- an aim to establish a direct line of communication with the City Council, for example, a regularly scheduled presentation at a Council meeting.

**Staff Actions**

- interest to expand the City’s role in encouraging travel by cycling;

[Action 1: The Bicycle Advisory Commission has been invited to set up a table at the annual “City Health Fair” held each October in the Sam Pipes Room for its employees, family members and retirees];

[Action 2: The Development Services Department has created a budget item in the amount of \$5,000 to support BAC actions that will be used by the BAC to encourage and educate Mercedians regarding bicycle travel];

[Action 3: Regarding the development of a Merced Bike Park, the Department of Parks and Community Services supports BAC involvement in the process and concurs that the design and operation of the park can be tuned to encourage and educate Mercedians regarding bicycle travel; Robert Tyler is the current BAC representative];

[Action 4: Metrics that gauge the City’s progress toward the “Building Blocks” of a “Bicycle Friendly Community” will be infused into the ATP/SRTS Plan in a manner that links future projects and programs with achieving the benchmarks defined by those “Building Blocks”].

## AGENDA ITEM I

BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING DATE: December 13, 2016

As a related matter, the BAC requested a copy of the feedback received as a result of their 2011 application to be recognized as a “Bicycle Friendly Community” (Attachment 1). While Merced has not received Bicycle Friendly Community status, many recommended actions were listed in the feedback document. Staff requests the BAC, based on their review of the feedback, to supplement and or modify the Draft 2017 Strategic Work Plan presented above before taking final action to establish a work plan.

### DISCUSSION

Staff recommends the BAC consider using the Bicycle Friendly Community’s “Building Blocks,” as a tool to help define the annual work plan. Actions in the work plan can be directed to help achieve the benchmarks used to rank a community’s rating, i.e. bronze, silver, gold, platinum and diamond. For example, in order to achieve “Bronze Status,” the City would need to reach the following benchmarks, some of which have been attained, while others have not.

<b><u>Benchmark</u></b>	<b><u>Associated Value</u></b>	<b><u>City of Merced Value</u></b>
<b>Key Outcomes</b>		
Ridership/People Commuting by Bicycle	1.2%	
Crashes per 10K Daily Commuter	370	
Fatalities per 10K Daily Commuter	1	
<b>Enforcement</b>		
Law Enforcement Bicycling Liaison	yes	
Bicycle Friendly Laws/Ordinances in Place	some	
<b>Education</b>		
Public Education Outreach	some	
Annual offering of Adult Bicycling Skills Classes	1	
Percent of Schools offering Bicycle Education	33%	
<b>Engineering</b>		
Bike Access to Public Transportation	good	
Total Bikeway Mileage to Total Road Mileage	26%	
Arterial Streets with Bike Lanes	33%	
<b>Evaluation</b>		
1 Bike Program Staff Person	per 77K citizens	
Bike Plan is Current and Being Implemented	maybe	
<b>Encouragement</b>		
Bike Month and Ride to Work Events	good	
Active Bicycle Advisory Committee	maybe	
Active Advocacy Group	maybe	
Recreational Facilities Like Bike Parks	maybe	

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In the table on the prior page, the benchmark and associated values are “metrics” that gauge the City’s attainment of “Building Blocks” to a “Bicycle Friendly Community.” By comparing the target metric with the City’s actual metric, several gaps were identified. The City could attain Bronze Award status by closing these gaps. At the December 2016, BAC meeting, Staff invites the BAC to discuss how these gaps may be filled and who, besides the BAC, could be involved in that effort. These ideas could be added to the list of actions in the “2017 Strategic Work Plan.”

### ACTION

With consideration of the “Bicycle Friendly Community” recommendations, as well as Staff’s encouragement to achieve the Bronze Award criteria in 2017, take a formal action to approve the “2017 Strategic Work Plan.” Staff also recommends that the BAC establish an ad-hoc working committee to devise an action plan to use the financial resources provided by the City Department of Development Services to encourage cycling as means to reach the benchmarks of the Bronze Award level.

### Attachments

1. Bicycle Friendly Community Application Feedback, Fall 2001.

# Feedback

Bicycle Friendly Community Application

**Merced, CA**

Fall 2011





Though **Merced, CA** has not yet reached Bicycle Friendly Community status, the reviewers felt that notable steps are being made in the right direction:

- **Engineering** Merced recently developed a policy to engineer streets with the consideration of bicyclists and is beginning to develop a trail network. Community and transportation planners, and civil engineers receive training in bicycle and pedestrian planning and engineering. Bike parking facilities conform to the currently recognized standards. Most public busses are equipped with bike racks. About twenty percent of roads accommodate bicycles and a third of arterial streets have bike lanes or paved shoulders.
- **Education** Merced has recently educated motorists and bicyclists on sharing the road safely through a dedicated bike page on the community website and share the road signs. Community requires safe driving training for transit operators and school bus operators.
- **Encouragement** Merced promotes National Bike Month through a city proclamation, a community ride, a mayor-led ride, a guide to Bike Month events, a Bike Month website, commuter breakfasts and energizer stations, and a trail construction/maintenance day. Community celebrates cycling outside of Bike Month through community rides and a trail construction/maintenance day.
- **Enforcement** Officers have received specific training on the relationship between bicycling and law enforcement. There are specific penalties for failing to yield to a cyclist when turning and/or it is illegal to park or drive in a bike lane (intersections excepted). There are penalties for motor vehicle users that 'door' cyclists. There is a ban on cell phone use while driving. There is a ban on texting while driving.
- **Evaluation & Planning** Merced is familiar with the needs of cyclists and has a bicycle master plan with dedicated funding. There is a trip reduction ordinance or program.

A particular **highlight** was the homeless' Wheel Solutions program.

The BFC review team expects good things in the future given the good local team.

Below, reviewers provided recommendations to promote bicycling in Merced in the short and long term. Increasing bicycle use can [improve the environment](#) by reducing the impact on residents of pollution and noise, limiting greenhouse gases, and improving the quality of public spaces; [Reduce congestion](#) by shifting short trips (the majority of trips in cities) out of cars. This will also make cities more accessible for public transport, walking, essential car travel, emergency services, and deliveries; **Save lives** by creating safer conditions for bicyclists and as a direct consequence improve the safety of all other road users. [Research shows](#) that increasing the number of bicyclists on the street improves bicycle safety; **Increase opportunities** for residents of all ages to participate socially and economically in the community, regardless of income or ability. Greater choice of travel modes also increases independence, especially among [seniors](#) and [children](#); [Boost the economy](#) by creating a community that is an attractive destination for new residents, tourists and businesses;



**Enhance recreational opportunities**, especially for children, and further contribute to the quality of life in the community; **Save city funds** by increasing the efficient use of public space, reducing the need for costly new road infrastructure, preventing crashes, improving the health of the community, and increasing the use of public transport; **Enhance public safety and security** by increasing the number of “eyes on the street” and providing more options for movement in the event of emergencies, natural disasters, and major public events; **Improve the health and well being** of the population by promoting routine physical activity.

**The key measures Merced should take to improve cycling in the community are:**

- Expanding the bicycle and pedestrian manager’s time focused on bike projects would help in scaling up your BFC efforts. Current work of the BPAC and TDM staff could be complemented by a staff person devoted to acquiring bike/ ped grants and making the community bicycle-friendly. See this report on the importance of Bicycle & Pedestrian program staff.  
[http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/reports/pdfs/why\\_bike\\_ped\\_staff\\_april\\_2010.pdf](http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/reports/pdfs/why_bike_ped_staff_april_2010.pdf)
- Increase the amount of [secure bicycle parking](#) at popular destinations such as transit stops, schools, recreation and entertainment facilities, retail and office clusters and churches throughout the community. Regulations that require bike parking, e.g. as part of new developments, can secure private funding for bike parking. More and more communities also ensure that multi-family residential developments provide secure and covered bike parking. See bicycle parking ordinances of [Madison, Wisconsin](#) and [Santa Cruz, California](#).
- Accommodate bicycles at intersections and multi-use path crossings to improve efficiency and safety of all road and path users. At intersections, time traffic lights for bicycle speeds and incorporate microwave cameras, loop detectors or bicycle signal heads, and include on-street pavement markings that indicate where cyclists should locate their bicycle to trigger the signal. Consider adding bike boxes to make bicyclists more visible to motorists. Consider incorporating grade separated multi-use path crossings or other high-visibility treatments on medium and high traffic roads. Ensure that both path and road users are clearly informed about who has the right-of-way at every crossing.
- Ensure that bicycle-safety education is a routine part of public education and that schools and the surrounding neighborhoods are particularly safe and convenient for biking. Work with your Bicycle Advisory Committee and local bicycle advocates to develop and implement [Safe Routes to School programs](#) that emphasizes bicycling for elementary schools, middle schools and high schools. Strongly encourage all schools to participate. In Arlington County, Virginia, Department of Public Works, Police and school officials assessed every school regarding its accessibility by bicycle. A list of problems was developed and measures were identified. Short-term projects such as painting crosswalks were implemented immediately, while larger construction projects are on-going. Funding is



available through the federal transportation bill SAFETEA-LU, among several other sources at both the federal and state levels. See [www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org) for more information.

- It is vital to make motorists and cyclists aware of their rights and responsibilities on the road. Continue to expand public education campaigns to promote the share the road message and the rights and responsibilities of all users, e.g. through public service announcements, a community newsletter article or a bicycle ambassador program. Consider taking advantage of your local bicycle advocates for content and strategy development and manpower. See a motorist education video at <http://www.bikelib.org/safety-education/motorists/driver-education/>. Also, see the excellent Look Campaign from New York City: [http://www.nyc.gov/html/look/html/about/about\\_us\\_text.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/look/html/about/about_us_text.shtml).

### **Reviewers provided the following menu of recommendations to further promote bicycling:**

#### **Engineering**

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Ensure that new and improved bicycle facilities conform to current best practices and guidelines – such as the [NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide](#), [AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities](#) and your DOT's own guidelines. Consider innovative bicycle infrastructure such as bicycle tracks, contra-flow bike lanes or colorful bike lanes.
- Provide [ongoing training](#) opportunities on accommodating bicyclists for engineering, planning staff, and law enforcement. Consider hosting a [Smart Cycling](#) course for city staff to better understand cyclists' needs, behavior, and their right to use city streets as well as multi-use paths for transportation. Your local bicycle advocacy group are a great resource for this kind of training.
- Install way-finding signage at strategic locations around the community. Here are some best practices from the Washington, DC area Council of Governments: <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/t1dZW1k20070516090831.pdf>
- Improve the coordination and communication between city departments and state paving and rehabilitation projects and facilities maintenance. Consider offering oversight to state DOT staff and contractors working within municipal boundaries. Ensure that facility design follows current best practice and that they are properly installed.
- Consider measuring the bicycle level of service (LOS) on community roads and at intersections, to be able to identify the most appropriate routes for inclusion in the community bicycle network, determine “weak links” in the network, prioritize sites needing improvement, and evaluate alternate treatments for improving bike-friendliness of a roadway or intersection: <http://www.bikelib.org/bike-planning/bicycle-level-of-service/> (roads) and <http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/library/details.cfm?id=4425> (intersections).



- Consider road diets in appropriate locations to make streets more efficient and safe. Use the newly created space for bicycle and pedestrian facilities:  
<http://www.walkable.org/assets/downloads/roaddiets.pdf>

#### Long Term Goals:

- Since arterial and collector roads are the backbone of every transportation network, it is essential to increase the number of wide shoulders or [bike lanes](#) along these roads to allow bicyclists of all skill levels to reach their destinations quickly and safely.
- Continue to expand the bike network and increase network connectivity through the use of bike lanes, bike tracks, shared lane arrows, signed routes and bicycle cut-throughs. On-street improvements coupled with the expansion of the off-street system will continue to increase use and improve safety. These improvements will also increase the effectiveness of encouragement efforts by providing a broader range of facility choices for users of various abilities and comfort levels.
- Allow access to suitable public lands for mountain bicyclists. Ensure to connect any off-road trails and facilities to the overall bicycle network. Look for ways to bridge the divide between the bike community and equestrian community by creating dedicated trails for each user group and multiuse trails where feasible.
- Develop a system of bicycle boulevards that creates an attractive, convenient, and comfortable cycling environment welcoming to cyclists of all ages and skill levels. See more on how to do it at <http://www.ibpi.usp.pdx.edu/guidebook.php>

#### Education

##### Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Improve the reach of the community's bicycle safety campaigns. Use valuable information from the League's Ride Better Tips in your outreach education and encouragement efforts. See the Ride Better Tips pages at <http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/better/index.php> , PSA's <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bikemonth/psas.php> and the downloadable Bicycle Safety Tips for Adults video at <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/shortversion.wmv>. Again, consider taking advantage of your local bicycle advocates for content and strategy development and manpower.
- Add bicycling and motorist education messages to local routine activities such as drivers licensing and testing, or include inserts in utility bills.



- Start a bicyclist and motorist ticket diversion program. Road users given citation are offered an opportunity to waive fees for violations by attending a bicycling education course. This should include a classroom and on-road component. See what Pima County has done: [http://bikeped.pima.gov/Safety%20\(pdf\)s/April%20-%20May%202011%20Bicycle%20Diversion%20Class%20\(No%20Locations\).pdf](http://bikeped.pima.gov/Safety%20(pdf)s/April%20-%20May%202011%20Bicycle%20Diversion%20Class%20(No%20Locations).pdf)
- Education on bicycling is not only important for bicyclists but for all road users - including motorists. Start a motorist education programs for professional drivers such as bus and taxi drivers in the city. See what San Francisco has done <http://www.sfbike.org/?drivertraining> Classes can be offered by League Cycling Instructors or local bicycle advocates and material is available through the League of American Bicyclists.
- Continue to improve bicycling education opportunities for children and adults. The essential [Smart Cycling](#) curriculum can be integrated into motor vehicle violation diversion programs, Safe Routes to School, as well as motorist education classes for city and private sector employees.
- Host a League Cycling Instructor seminar to increase the number of certified League Cycling Instructors in your community, who can teach both adult and child classes. Having local instructors will enable your community to expand cycling education, recruit knowledgeable cycling ambassadors, deliver education to motorists, provide cycling education to adults, and have an expert to assist in encouragement programs. Contact the League office or visit <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/> for information.
- Team with a local advocacy group, bicycle shop, or League Cycling Instructor to offer regular public maintenance classes to residents at public parks, libraries, community centers and in conjunction with city events. A short tutorial on how to change a flat tire can empower a person to ride their bike more often. You can find local instructors and bike shops here: [https://members.bikeleague.org/members\\_online/members/findit.asp](https://members.bikeleague.org/members_online/members/findit.asp)
- Offer bicycling skills classes, Traffic Skills 101 classes and commuter classes on a *frequent* basis or encourage a local bicycle advocacy group, club or shop to do so. You could invite a League Cycling Instructor (LCI) to conduct the classes. Ideally the instruction would incorporate a classroom portion as well as on-road training. For examples of educational materials visit: <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/>. To find a local LCI go to: [https://members.bikeleague.org/members\\_online/members/findit.asp](https://members.bikeleague.org/members_online/members/findit.asp)

### **Encouragement**

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Reach children with bicycling education outside of school through recreation programs, bicycle repair co-ops, family-friendly community bicycle events and through youth bike



clubs. Here is an example from Portland, OR -

<http://www.communitycyclingcenter.org/index.php/programs-for-youth>

- Promote, host, sponsor and/or encourage a variety of bicycle-themed, fun and family-friendly community events year-round, such as a bike movie festival, a 4<sup>th</sup> of July bike parade, an “increase-your-appetite” Thanksgiving community ride, a dress-like-Santa community ride before Christmas, a kids triathlon, a bicycle fashion show, a Halloween bike decoration competition, a bike to the arts event, etc. Work closely with local bicycle advocacy groups, bike clubs, bike shops, bike teams and schools. Provide appropriate safety measures such as road closures or police escorts.
- Encourage local businesses to promote cycling to the workplace and to seek recognition through the *Bicycle Friendly Business* program. Businesses will profit from a [healthier, happier and more productive workforce](#) while the community would potentially profit from some bicycle-active businesses as well: increasing the bicycle mode share, less commuter traffic, better air quality, public bike parking in prime locations provided by businesses, new and powerful partners in advocating for bike infrastructure and programs on the local, state and federal level, and public bike events, skills and maintenance classes hosted or sponsored by businesses. The city should be the model employer for the rest of the community. For more information about the free program please visit <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/bicyclefriendlybusiness/>.
- Consider passing an [ordinance or local code](#) that would require larger employers to provide [bicycle parking](#), shower facilities, and other end-of-trip amenities.
- Encourage local institutions of higher education to promote cycling and to seek recognition through the [Bicycle Friendly University](#) program. College and university campuses are unique environments for their high density, stimulating atmosphere and defined boundaries. These factors make them ideal environments to incorporate bikes. Many colleges and universities have built upon these good conditions and embraced the enthusiasm for more bicycle-friendly campuses by incorporating bike share programs, bike co-ops, clubs, bicycling education classes and policies to promote bicycling as a preferred means of transportation. The community could potentially profit as well: Communities near a BFU such as Stanford or University of California at Davis have a very high number of regular bicyclists (as many students bike to campus, shops and restaurants), less congestion around campus, safer streets and university-hosted public bicycle events, programs and classes.” See what Stanford University is doing for cyclists: [http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/communities/bfc\\_stanford\\_university.php](http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/communities/bfc_stanford_university.php)
- Actively involve the local bicycle community in community planning efforts, policy development and public outreach.



- Set up and promote bicycle-themed community celebrations and/or rides each time the community completes a new bicycle related project. This is a great way to show off the city's good efforts and introduces new users to the improvement.
- Design and publish several local bike maps in paper and online, addressing diverse needs and skill levels (commuter, visitor, sport cyclist, mountain biker etc). Each map should outline the existing on and/or off road bicycle network by infrastructure type and skill level (if applicable). In addition, maps could identify the location of landmarks, greenways, low-traffic streets, public restrooms, bike routes, designated scenic routes, bike stations, bike repair stations, bike parking and transit stations. See Portland, Oregon's commuter bike map: <http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=39402&a=322407>
- Consider offering a 'Ciclovia' or 'Summer Streets' type event, closing off a major corridor to auto traffic and offering the space to cyclists, pedestrians and group exercise events. <http://cicloviarecreativa.uniandes.edu.co/english/index.html>
- Consider partnering with a local bicycle advocacy group or bike club to launch a bike buddy or bicyclist mentorship program for inexperienced riders. A bike mentorship program that teams experienced cyclists with newcomers is a great way to encourage and educate novice commuters. See what Spokane, Wash. and Charlotte, N.C. are doing <http://groups.google.com/group/bikementor>, <http://www.spokanebicycleclub.org/bikebuddy.htm>
- Ensure that there is a place for visitors and community members to rent bicycles.
- Implement a mechanism that ensures that facilities, programs and encouragement efforts are implemented in traditionally underserved communities.

#### Long Term Goals

- Develop a series of short (2-5 mi.) (themed) loop rides around the community and provide appropriate way-finding signage. Integrate these rides into local bike maps.
- Consider launching a bike sharing system that is open to the public. A bike share system is a convenient, cost effective, and healthy way of encouraging locals and visitors to make short trips by bike. See what is being done across the country at <http://streetswiki.wikispaces.com/Public+Bike-Sharing+Programs>
- Recreational bicycling can be promoted through facilities and programs like mountain bike parks, velodromes, cyclocross course or similar bicycle amenities. Ensure that the facilities are accessible by bicycle, so that there is no need to drive to ride.



## Enforcement

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Invite a police officer to become an active member of the bicycle advisory committee. Appoint a law-enforcement point person to interact with cyclists.
- Actively facilitate stronger connections between bicycle advocates, the wider bicycling community and law enforcement. Ask police officers to use targeted information and enforcement to encourage motorists *and* cyclists to share the road. This could be in the form of a brochure or tip card explaining each user's rights and responsibilities. Have information material available in Spanish, if applicable. Also increase the number of police officers patrolling multi-use paths *and* streets on bike, as it gives officers a better understanding of the conditions for cyclists and keeps secluded multi-use paths safe.
- Local laws that discriminate against cyclists, or restrict their right to travel, or reduce their relative safety, should be repealed.

## Evaluation/Planning

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Expand efforts to evaluate bicycle crash statistics and produce a specific plan to reduce the number of crashes in the community. Available tools include *Intersection Magic*: <http://www.pdmagic.com/im/> and [PBCAT](#). See the report [Bicyclist Fatalities and Serious Injuries in New York City 1996-2005](#)
- Consider conducting an economic impact study on bicycling in your community. See what Portland, OR has done: [http://www.altaplanning.com/App\\_Content/files/fp\\_docs/2008%20Portland%20Bicycle-Related%20Economy%20Report.pdf](http://www.altaplanning.com/App_Content/files/fp_docs/2008%20Portland%20Bicycle-Related%20Economy%20Report.pdf)

Long Term Goals

- Integrate the implementation of the bike plan into the master plan, all land use plans, zoning ordinances and larger development projects.
- Allow and encourage a mix of uses, a well connected street network and compact development patterns throughout the community to shorten the distances people need to bike.
- Work with the [mountain biking community](#) to develop a plan for off-road access and increase opportunities for [single-track](#) riding within the city.

For more ideas and best practices please visit the [Bicycle Friendly Community Resource Page](#).