

# The right road: A county plan maps the future for bikers, walkers

Thursday, February 24, 2011

**Pittsburgh Post-Gazette**

Riding a bicycle is a skill no one forgets. But too often people don't remember the pleasure and usefulness of riding a bike or simply taking a walk. That has changed and now Allegheny County is putting its power behind the residents who power themselves.

That's official. The county has released a blueprint called Active Allegheny for integrating bike riding into other transportation plans within its borders and in the region. The report at [www.activeallegheny.com](http://www.activeallegheny.com) has tips for making roads and trails safer and friendly to bicyclists and walkers.

The report calls for more designated bike routes and identified 10 corridors as priorities for further study and possible improvements. Funded by a \$300,000 state grant, staff from a consulting firm spent eight months getting a biking and walking perspective of the county. The study revealed some interesting facts.

Those who choose to travel using their own energy have often complained about the dangers -- and for good reason. From January 2005 through December 2009, 457 crashes involving bikes were reported with 2,114 involving pedestrians. Three bicyclists and 58 pedestrians were killed.

For bikes, the most hazardous stretch was Penn Avenue with 10 crashes, followed by Forbes Avenue with nine. For walkers, Fifth Avenue had 55 accidents and Penn Avenue 46. The report makes suggestions on how many roads can be made safer for these travelers.

Although there's work to be done, public agencies recognize that so-called active transportation has caught on. A Port Authority committee has approved purchase of 120 bike racks to make sure every bus in the fleet is so equipped. The need is there; commuting by bike increased 206 percent from 2000 to 2009.

Biking and walking are healthy, economical and environmentally friendly choices that deserve official encouragement. How green can be our valley? That's up to residents and their municipalities. With this report, it shouldn't be uphill from here.

Read more: <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/11055/1127522-192.stm#ixzz1S69WWnyN>