Background
In August 2012 the Grays Harbor Public Health and Social Services Department and the Grays Harbor Council of Governments (GHCOG) entered into an agreement to develop an assessment of existing bicycle facilities. The Active Living Project – Biking Assessment, as it became known, was funded through a Community Transformation Grant with the goal of carrying out priority health improvement initiatives as identified therein.

The agreement proposed a small pilot project within the main urban core of Grays Harbor (Aberdeen, Cosmopolis, and Hoquiam) to identify existing bicycling facilities including multi use trails and preferred bicycle street routes; community activity centers and destinations; and impediments to biking. Community Biking Maps for the urban core and cities depicting trails and routes, condition, community destinations, and impediments were also included as part of this project. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data would provide the foundation for the mapping.

Need
Grays Harbor County lags behind other counties in identifying and mapping bike routes and bike trails, and educating our community about biking opportunities and policy development that promotes biking as a healthy activity. In order to promote biking as a healthy lifestyle and integrate it as a part of daily life, we must:

- assess biking connectivity within and between communities;
- plan and implement activities and projects that ensure cycling without impediments for a wide range of skill levels;
- promote the benefits of biking and the availability of opportunities in our community; and
- establish guidance that encourages biking and is integrated into local planning objectives.

Terminology
To ensure planning and assessment consistency, industry standard terminology was used. Terms and descriptions were derived from the Washington State Department of Transportation Design Manual:

- **Share-use path** - A facility physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic. Share-use paths are primarily used by bicyclist and pedestrians. With appropriate design considerations, equestrians may also be accommodated by a share-use path.

- **Bicycle route** - A system of facilities that are used or have a high potential for use by bicyclists or that are designated as such by the jurisdiction having authority.

- **Bike lane** - A portion of a highway or street identified by signs and pavement markings as reserved for bicycle use.

- **Shared roadway** - A roadway that is open to both bicycle and motor vehicle travel.

- **Signed shared roadway** - A shared roadway that has been designated by signage as a route for bicycle use.
Methodology
Information and data used in the development of the biking inventory and facility assessment was derived from: document searches using local transportation plans, local parks and recreation comprehensive plans; discussions with local park and community planners; the Washington State Department of Transportation Washington State Bicycle Map; and, discussions held with members of the local biking community. In each stage of development data was mapped and presented for discussion and input. The process occurred as follows:

✓ Inventory maps created:
  • Inventory of existing bicycle facilities utilizing local planning and park plan documents.
  • Highway traffic volumes were obtained from the Washington State Department of Transportation Washington State Bicycle Map.
  • Cycling destinations and impediments were identified by GHCOG staff.

✓ Draft map review by city staff:
  • Infilled any missing information on existing facilities.
  • Added to cycling destinations and impediments.
  • Provided proposed and potential biking facilities: bike lanes and share-use facilities.

✓ Inventory maps were updated to include input from city staff.

✓ Field work:
  • Made site visits to document existing conditions.
  • Created a photo library based on site visits for visual representation.

✓ Inventory maps were updated to include site visit data.

✓ Cycling focus group review and input:
  • Focus group members viewed and discussed the photo library.
  • Focus group members reviewed inventory maps and provided updates on cycling destinations and impediments.
  • Focus group members identified routes, street, sidewalk, and share-use paths, they bike. This information was added to the maps as Cycling Routes, where people ride.
  • Focus group members also identified places they would like to bike if they could. This information was added to the maps as proposed or potential bicycle facilities data.

✓ Inventory maps were updated to include input from focus group members.

✓ Two inventory maps were created for the project pilot area.
  • Map A focuses on the current cycling conditions: Existing Facilities, Cycling Routes, Impediments, and Destinations.

Existing Conditions
Initial findings in the assessment area revealed the lack of existing dedicated biking facilities. Two types of existing facilities were found: shared roadway and share-use paths. All roadways are considered to be shared roadways. Without signage or markings indicating that the roadway has been designated for bicycle use, traffic volumes, impediments, and vehicle culture make many of these facilities unsafe for inexperienced riders.
Shoulder widths and surface conditions on existing roadways vary greatly. Shoulder widths vary according to the classification of roadway. Within the assessment area shoulder widths from six feet in width to non-existent were observed. Surface conditions included concrete, black top, chip seal, and gravel, and in some areas a mix of the aforementioned.

Share-use paths, as identified on Map A - Active Living Bicycle Facilities Inventory project: Existing Facilities, Cycling Routes, Impediments, and Destinations Pilot Study area, were found to be recreational in nature and lack the connectivity that facilitates daily use as part of a destination point or commute pattern. Surface conditions include pavement and gravel.

Skill level is also a consideration when discussing facility types and surface conditions. Occasional riders and young children do not possess the same ability as seasoned riders. Similarly, the type of bike utilized varies by skill level. A soft natural surface or a gravel surface may become an impediment to less skilled riders while posing no impediment at all to a seasoned rider.

In an effort to understand use patterns, destination points and impediments were identified. While urban destination points are somewhat universal, it is important to note that the definition of an impediment fluctuated according to the skill level of the rider. Bridges are the universal impediment among all ridership levels due to narrow or non-existent shoulders/sidewalks, steep grade, or inadequate physical access (ramps) to/from the bridge. (Please refer to Destination and Impediment spreadsheets for detailed information.)

Outcomes
Public Education Campaign
A public education campaign is a highly effective, low cost and easily implementable approach to increasing bicycle awareness. The education outreach should be geared towards:

- Adult riders – Provide safety education and information on the rules of the road pertaining to bicycling.
- Driving public – Remind drivers that all roads are shared use facilities and inform them of cyclists’ rights on the road.
- Business owners – Provide education on how business owners can make their establishments “biking friendly”.
- Visitors – Remind those visiting the region that we accommodate cyclists on our roadways.
- Bike registries – educate users and law enforcement officials on the existence and use of bike registries to deter bicycle theft and if stolen aid in recovery.

Signage
A system of standardized signage should be considered as a means of increasing public awareness, altering driver expectations and increasing safety. This could include sign standards, pavement markings and bike guides. Signage can be used to indicate dedicated areas on existing streets and as a directional system marking safer routes for bike users.

Implement 'bike scale' signage to points of interest, for example, signage at the Young St. Bridge for the Curt Cobain memorial.

Route Information
Create bike maps identifying the safest route to destination points in each city. Use side streets and alleyways with good visibility to get bikes off of highways and main streets. Consider including the average time it takes to bike to or between destination points. Create a web site dedicated to biking in Grays Harbor. Post routes, maps, travel times and biking events.
Use bike scale signing to direct riders to central points for information such as the Visitor Information Center.

Bike Racks
Provide more bike racks in our communities.

Unify Regulations
Facilitate riding across city boundaries by ensuring that rules governing riding (i.e. helmet laws and sidewalk use regulations) are universal across city boundaries.

Yellow Bike Program
Implement a bike share program within the urban core.

Deliverables
- Currently used routes, destinations, and impediments maps for Aberdeen, Cosmopolis, and Hoquiam. (hard copy & electronic)
- Currently used routes, destinations, and impediments maps for the urban center. (hard copy & electronic)
- Conclusion and Summary of Findings report.

Recommendations
Short-term
Develop a Bike Safe Bike Smart Grays Harbor brochure that includes safety tips, rules (helmet laws, riding with traffic flow, etc.), suggested routes, and locations where bikes can be safely parked.

Long-term
Develop a tri-city area Bike Facility Improvement Plan to identify needed improvements such as dedicated routes, bike lanes, bike racks, signage, and funding strategies.

Future Need
Completion of the following assessments will provide the tools needed to guide the development of policies and implementation practices that promote biking in our communities:
- Identify gaps in bicycling connectivity in urban core
- Assess funding needs to complete gaps
- Assess other communities in Grays Harbor
- Conduct a county-wide facility and connectivity assessment.