



**Kentucky Bicycle and
Bikeway Commission**

2007 Recommendations
*to the Secretary of the
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet*

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1 Introduction

The Kentucky Bicycle and Bikeway Commission (“KBBC”) formed by the legislature in 1992 is mandated to:

- *represent the interests of bicyclists in advising the Secretary on all matters pertaining to bicycles, bikeways and their use, extent and location,*
- *assist the bicycle and bikeway program in the exercise of its duties within the Cabinet, and*
- *promote the best interests of the bicycling public, within the context of the total transportation system, to governing officials and the public at large.*¹

The health and economic benefits related to a sound cycling infrastructure are well known throughout the United States and abroad. Benefits derive from activities including fundamental alternative transportation to cycling-related recreation and tourism. It is widely recognized throughout the cycling community, both state-wide and nationally, that, although Kentucky is a remarkable venue for cycling due to its scenic qualities, location and the prospect of a long riding season, it lags far behind other states in promoting cycling awareness, cycling infrastructure, and the health benefits associated with the activity. The Commission recognizes these realities and provides the following recommendations to the Transportation Cabinet in the hope that Commonwealth agencies will coordinate and cooperate to take advantage of opportunities to include cycling in planning government-related projects and programs.

¹ (KRS 174.125(3)(a)-(c))

The recommendations provided herein are partially the result of the Commission's annual meeting held on April 20 and 21, 2007 in Lexington, Kentucky. The Commission hosted speakers from the Transportation Cabinet, the City of Louisville, the Governor's Office of Wellness, the Kentucky Rails to Trails Council, the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Council, and members of the private sector with cycling-related businesses, along with interested citizens.

The Commission believes that while there are dispersed cycling-related projects and organizations in various parts of the Commonwealth, there is a lack of serious and concentrated coordination or developmental support at the state level. The lack of a well-understood, accepted, and broad policy from the highest levels of both state and local governments hampers the cohesive and comprehensive movement to develop cycling infrastructure, and hence gaining the health and economic benefits that are being felt by other states and communities around the nation that have adopted such policies.

Consistent with the duties of the Kentucky Bicycle and Bikeway Commission under KRS 174.125(3), the Commission presents the following recommendations to promote the best interests of the bicycling public to governing officials and the citizens of Kentucky. In providing the comments contained in this advisory, the Commission recognizes that the development of a cycling infrastructure and the promotion of the associated "cycling culture" in Kentucky, although behind most states in the nation, is nevertheless underway and gaining momentum. Coordination between state and local governments, private sector, and cycling advocacy groups, if fostered properly, will allow Kentucky to make measurable health and economic gains associated with cycling.

2 *Coordination With and Within the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet*

A. Local Funding Awareness

The Commission recognizes that the Transportation Cabinet, as an agency that receives and distributes federal grants, must abide by certain funding guidelines established within specific federal programs. It is apparent that actual

cycling-related projects have been underfunded in Kentucky for many years and that many local agencies/governments are unaware of the actual funding cycle. It is possible that there is a negative feedback loop in that since cycling projects are not funded, local governments aren't interested in pursuing cycling related grant applications. The Commission feels that it is imperative that the Cabinet takes a more active role in advising local governments and Area Developments Districts regarding the funding cycle and possible funding sources for trails and other cycling-related programs and infrastructure. Press releases by the Cabinet advising the public in general of specific grant opportunities may also foster stronger local response.

B. Cycling Considerations in Engineering Design

It appears to the Commission after specific inquiry that highway engineering in the Commonwealth does not necessarily include (and some feel finds ways to exclude) cycling as a design component, as it is not the “traditional” perspective of how we design roads. The Commission recommends strongly that a “cycling advocate” in the Cabinet’s Office of Special Projects, Bike/Ped Coordinator, and another expressly designated design professional within the Cabinet’s engineering design department to advocate cycling be involved in the environmental assessment and design phases of all Kentucky Transportation Cabinet roadway projects. To reinforce the goal of expanding cycling infrastructure in the Commonwealth, the Commission recommends that the Transportation Cabinet revise its bike/ped policy from a “must consider” to a “must provide, unless found to be economically infeasible” standard for all new and reconstructed state maintained roadways.

C. Share the Road Initiative

Among other low effort activities that the Transportation Cabinet should undertake to encourage and promote safe cycling throughout the Commonwealth includes, but is not limited to, the Share the Road Program, including the posting of Share the Road Signs on Kentucky routes that are frequented by cyclists. It is apparent that there is a significant disparity between the counties in that some have an abundance of Share the Road signs where others, including some counties with a high population of cyclists (e.g. Fayette County), have none.

The Transportation Cabinet should immediately initiate and coordinate a policy throughout all counties in order to promote motorist awareness of cycling along its scenic and most frequented cycling routes. This effort is particularly important in light of the Transportation Cabinet’s own recent publication, “Kentucky Bicycle Tours.” Local cycling clubs can also provide the Cabinet with their most frequented scenic route maps to aid the Cabinet in defining those roads that are most frequented by cyclists. Rather than wait for others, including volunteer groups, to apply for signage, the Commission recommends that the Cabinet take the lead on this high visibility effort.

The Kentucky Drivers Manual should also include among its illustrations of traffic signs, the “Share the Road” sign, along with the narrative discussions regarding the rights and obligations of drivers and cyclists regarding each other.

3 State Cycling Plan

The Commission is in agreement that the statewide cycling plan should be more than a “paper study” on a shelf, and should be developed in coordination with other agencies, local governments, and the cycling community. Through this coordination, the Cabinet can also identify specific projects that should be included in the state plan. The planning process should not be relegated to only the Transportation Cabinet’s Office of Special Projects, but should be coordinated with the Cabinet’s engineering design division, and other state agencies, including the Tourism Department and the Parks Department within the Kentucky Commerce Cabinet and the Governor’s Office of Wellness. If such a plan is to be meaningful, the planners should include these and other interested agencies and organizations.

4 Local Initiatives

Louisville has declared its intent to be recognized nationally as a designated “Bicycle Friendly City” and has raised over sixty million dollars in government grants and private donations to develop the project. The City of Louisville has the most aggressive cycling development plan in the Commonwealth and will be among the best in the nation with the planning and development of the

“Louisville Loop” which will be a 100 mile loop and supporting network of trails and related infrastructure. Louisville has set the standard for the Commonwealth and the Commission fully supports and encourages the Program. Such an effort is worth studying and modeling by senior state decision-makers.

Lexington’s new administration has recently committed to becoming a “Bicycle Friendly City” and Mayor Jim Newberry has called for a Cycling Summit in the fall of 2007 in pursuit of that goal. The development of a recreational trail named the “Healthway Trail,” from the Kentucky Horse Park on the north to the palisades on the Kentucky River through the City of Lexington and Jessamine County, is a project in its inception.

The Commission strongly encourages the Transportation Cabinet and other state agencies to study the Louisville Program, monitor and participate in the Lexington effort, and create an active statewide task force in bringing together state and local officials at political/decision making levels to learn about and hence support such programs throughout the Commonwealth. The Commission supports the idea of coordinating and supporting a state-wide high level Cycling Summit similar to what Louisville did in developing support for the Louisville Loop and Lexington is planning for the fall.

5 Support for Trail Development

Kentucky ranks 47th in the nation regarding the development of recreational trails for cycling and other activities. It is well documented throughout the nation that the development of trails through a community and a region fosters more health and recreation related activities, local economic centers, and decreases cycling related accidents. It has become clear throughout the years that Kentucky does not have a bona fide governmental interest in the National Rails to Trails Program, as there is not a full time rail trail coordinator in state government. The Commission highly recommends that for every railroad abandonment in Kentucky there should be a mandate that it be “rail banked” under applicable law for consideration and development as a rail trail. The Commission feels strongly that the concept of rails to trails in Kentucky should be institutionalized as an office in a state cabinet (e.g. Transportation, Tourism,

Economic Development), rather than left to volunteer organizations which, while heartfelt and helpful to the cause, lack the full time support, funding, and inertia of state government. Of course, coordination at the grass roots level with the Kentucky Rails to Trails Council, Inc. and other local volunteer groups will be essential in advancing this mandate. In support of this recommendation, the Transportation Cabinet, as the agency with primary responsibility for the bike/ped programs, should consider introducing departmental legislation in the next session of the General Assembly to institutionalize the Rails to Trails effort in Kentucky, including appropriate legislation relating to interests in abandoned rail-line rights of way. The Commission will strongly support and participate in such an effort.

6 Conclusion

The few recommendations cited in this report, if adopted, will allow the Commonwealth to develop, at an institutional level, a commitment to obtaining the health and economic benefits that are being offered and enjoyed in other states and communities around the country. Certainly there are other efforts that can and eventually should be adopted to support cycling in Kentucky, but the Commission is well aware that making the structural changes addressed herein will, in fact, lead to expanded efforts to make Kentucky the safe and beautiful cycling venue that we all imagine.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kentucky Bicycle and Bikeway Commission

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