

Governor's Bicycle Coordinating Council 2025 Annual Report

Background

The Governor's Bicycle Coordinating Council (Council) was originally created under Governor Patrick Lucey in June 1977 and re-created by subsequent Governors including Governor Tony Evers' Executive Order #182 (January 4, 2023). The Council includes 17 members that represent the general public, the legislature, and state agencies. The Council considers all matters relating to unifying and coordinating the efforts of state agencies in encouraging the use of the bicycle as a form of transportation and recreation, promoting bicycle safety, education and regulation; promoting bicycling as a tourist and recreational activity; and disseminating information on available state and federal funding for bicycle related activities and facilities to counties and municipalities; and reviewing bicycle related programs of state agencies and making recommendations to assure a coordinated state program.

In 2025, the Council met quarterly to discuss statewide bicycling issues and various related initiatives in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Council Members: Andrew Potts (Chairperson), Stephanie Bradley Wilson, Craig Heywood, Brenda Maxwell (resigned in September, currently vacant), James Miller, Scott Peterson, Jessica Wineberg, Christopher Squires representing WisDOT, WisDOT's Bureau of Transportation Safety (position currently vacant), Sara Rigelman representing the Secretary of WDNR, David Spiegelberg representing the Secretary of Tourism), Christine Anderson (replaced Michael Morgen in January) representing the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Lexi Davis representing the State Department of Health Services, Senator Chris Larson and Representative Lee Snodgrass. Vacant appointments from the Wisconsin Senate and Assembly have not been filled since Senator Luther Olsen and Representative Keith Ripp left office in 2020 and 2017 respectively.

Work Activities

Work of the Council and state agencies for 2025 can be divided into the following pursuits:

Legislative Initiatives

- The Council continues to work with legislative representatives on the Council and looks forward to continuing those efforts as vacant appointments are filled.
- The Council was kept informed on several legislative initiatives, including:
 - The development of the Biennial 2025-2027 State Budget
 - Legislative bicycle safety bills previously introduced by Representative Snodgrass and Representative Kristina Shelton
 - Proposed parks funding bills (DNR Revenue Stream Refresh Package)
 - Condemnation Authority for recreational trails: LRB 25-3584/1, 2025 Assembly Bill (AB) 694 and Senate Bill (SB) 690
 - Bills introduced by Rep Snodgrass and Sen Larson:
 - Requiring drivers to stop for pedestrians at crosswalks (2025 AB 332 and 2025 SB 345)
 - Establishing a refundable income tax credit for bicycle purchases (2025 AB 333 and SB 344)
 - Requiring bicycle and pedestrian facilities in highway projects and granting rule-making authority (2025 AB 334 and 2025 SB 343). This would return statutory language to what was law prior to changes made in 2015 Wisconsin Act 55.
 - Potential renewal of the Knowles – Nelson Stewardship Program

State Agency Initiatives

Department of Health Services

- *Ongoing efforts to support physical activity, including bicycling:* The Council received updates on DHS initiatives and grants that promote physical activity.
 - The State Physical Activity and Nutrition Program received Centers for Disease Control (CDC) funding for a 5-year program. The physical activity strategy is focused on community design for physical activity.
 - Updates to the Chronic Disease Prevention Program webpage related to the Community Design for Physical Activity strategy.
 - Partnerships with local public health, community-based organizations, Regional Planning Commissions and departments of public works on projects such as bike audits and traffic calming quick-builds.

Department of Natural Resources

- *Provide and facilitate recreational opportunities on various state trail and park projects:* The Council received updates on proposals, issues and topics related to biking activities on state trails and parks. This includes new trail proposals throughout the state, trail conditions and master plan efforts for WI State Parks as well as information from other State Councils where there is shared interest (e.g. mutual topics on bicycling for the State Trails Council, the Nonmotorized Recreation and Transportation Trails Council, and the Recreation Stakeholder Council). The Council also received updates regarding ongoing improvements such as the Great Sauk State Trail connection over the Wisconsin River and other projects.
- *Planning Projects:* The Council received updates on WDNR-led planning and expansion efforts, including the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, design and engineering for the replacement of the Badger State Trail Steward Tunnel, and other various bridge and trail repairs and replacements. The Council also received updates regarding proposals for the renewal of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.
- *Events to Promote bicycling and outdoor recreation:* The Council was briefed on WDNR efforts related to events such as the 125th Anniversary of the State Park System, Ride Across Wisconsin, National Trails Day, Free Fun Weekend, and Wisconsin Bike Week.

Department of Public Instruction

- *Provide resources on safe bicycling practices:* The Council supports and encourages joint agency efforts in educating and training on safe bicycling practices.

Department of Tourism

- *Increasing visibility of bicycling opportunities:* The Council continued to support and receive briefings on the ways in which the Department of Tourism promotes year-round bicycle tourism. Methods the Department uses to promote bicycling include providing grants to communities that promote bicycle and pedestrian related events, and advertising bicycling opportunities online and in print materials. The Council received updates regarding the International Trail Summit in Madison in April. The Office of Outdoor Recreation rolled out a pilot for the DIY Economic Impact Program. Two of the participating groups focused on bicycling events. As of September, the Travel Wisconsin Trail Report had seen total active users for biking at almost 200% of the 2024 total. The Council also received updates regarding Department of Tourism programs such as the Joint Effort Marketing grants and the Ready, Set, Go! Sports Marketing grants.

Department of Transportation

- *Planning Projects:* The Council received updates on the Active Transportation Plan 2050 which will combine and update the existing Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan (developed in 1998) and the Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan (developed in 2002). The Council also received updates on the Multimodal Design Guide update which is underway at WisDOT and will combine and

update design guidance for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects. The Council received updates regarding the application for the designation of the Mississippi River Trail as a US Bike Route. Representatives from WisDOT also appraised the Council of the Southeast Wisconsin Non-Motorized Count Program, which collects count data from WisDOT and other agencies in that region.

- *Bicycle and Pedestrian Funding Programs:* The Council was kept informed on Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) project solicitation and selection processes. The Council was also appraised by the WisDOT Bureau of Transportation Safety of other available funding opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian safety and outreach projects.
- *Ongoing Programs to Support and Promote Bicycling:* The Council received updates and promotes WisDOT programs that encourage bicycling and infrastructure investments.

Successful Council Initiatives and Accomplishments

- The Council provided feedback on the needs of Wisconsin bicyclists and pedestrians for WisDOT's new Active Transportation Plan 2050 and Multimodal Design Guide update.
- The Council approved the final implementation of a new Council webpage to be hosted on the WisDOT website.
- The Council participated in annual public records training provided by the WisDOT Office of General Counsel.
- The Council received presentations on and provided feedback regarding the following topics:
 - Week Without Driving – Kayla Haas (Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization)
 - Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Counting Pilot Program: Yang, Li PHD and Xiao Qin, PHD (University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee)
 - Shifts in Pedestrian and Bicyclist Injuries Research Study: Robert J. Schneider, PHD (University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee)
 - Great Lakes Waterfront Trail Project: Christopher Morgan (National Park Service) and John Hartig

Future Goals and Initiatives – 2026

- Stay informed on and advocate for improvements to state bicycle policies and programs.
- Explore equity in cycling and barriers to access. Support the promotion of bicycling in underrepresented communities.
- Support increased funding for bicycle infrastructure and programming.
- Support statewide bicycle planning efforts.
- Work with partners to promote Bike to School Day and Wisconsin Bike Week.
- Update the Bicycle Event Toolkit
- Promote the 2024 update of the Economic Impact of Bicycling in Wisconsin report
- Continue to provide feedback on the needs of Wisconsin bicyclists and pedestrians for WisDOT's new Active Transportation Plan 2050. Promote the release of the Plan once it is finalized in 2026.
- Develop a review of E-Bikes and E-Motos policies in the State of Wisconsin, including a report to the Legislature.