

New Options Coming For Pittsburgh Bicyclists - BikeRadar

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By Peter Suci from Detroit, Michigan

Active Allegheny looks to give cyclists more options than just the city's busy streets (Active Allegheny)

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Many city cyclists across the country have wonderful roads to explore within riding distance, but getting to the quiet, challenging riding terrain remains a problem; many times riders are forced through places that aren't so bike friendly and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is no exception.

The problem in Pittsburgh is that many of the roads in Allegheny County are narrow, making it far from easy or safe for riders or pedestrians.

Active Allegheny, the county's active transportation plan with sustainable travel choices destinations, could change all this. The plan outlines a blueprint for improved access and choices to connect people to communities, work sites, transit, schools, attractions and residences by bike, says Lynn Heckman, the city's assistant director-transportation initiatives.

"The plan integrates non-vehicular modes of transportation, specifically walking and biking, into our transportation system to increase 'livability,'" says Heckman, noting that the benefits and rewards of active transportation range from: cost savings; low-cost exercise opportunities with healthier lifestyles; a more vibrant, safe community with neighbors-out-on-the-street and potential for revitalized local business districts; reductions in congestion, air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions and increases in neighborhood desirability and value. "The plan identifies major arterial bicycle corridors/routes, to facilitate actions by diverse groups to connect from individual neighborhoods to a main network system."

The city already know that there is demand for new bike and alternative transport options. Bicycling has surged in popularity in Western Pennsylvania thanks to the development of past initiatives that include the Great Allegheny Passage, Three Rivers Heritage Trail, Montour Trail and the Panhandle Trail. According to census data quoted in a recent report, bicycle commuting in the city of Pittsburgh and surrounding suburbs has increased 206 percent from 2000 to 2009.

The new plan, which was completed in December of last year as a partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), received funding through a competitive PA Communities Transportation Initiative (PCTI) grant of \$300,000. A key part of it is the identification of major arterial bicycle corridors/routes for the north, east, south and west sections of the city, and to facilitate the ability of diverse groups to plan and make connections, or partial connections, from individual neighborhoods to a main network system.

"This Plan shows how we can integrate walking, biking, and other active, healthy travel modes into our existing transportation system," said county executive Dan Onorato. "Planning and prioritizing investments in commuter bike routes and walking facilities will enhance our transportation network and provide sustainable travel choices to move people to-and-from their destinations. The Active Allegheny plan is a blueprint for improved access and choices to connect people to communities, work sites, transit, schools, attractions and residences. By working together we can provide active transportation infrastructure to increase connectivity, sustainability and an enhanced quality of life for County residents."

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