

# Conway's Bicycle Master Plan

## Introduction

The city of Conway is developing into a Bicycle-Friendly Community. With three institutions of higher education, a progressive city government and a growing knowledge-based industry, Conway is poised to become the premier “green” city in Arkansas. On August 12, 2008, the Conway City Council passed two far-reaching resolutions (see Resolutions R-08-23 and R-08-24) at the behest of Mayor Tab Townsell. The Conway City Council resolved to: “Dedicate all natural gas severance tax state turn-back funds that accrete to Conway to the provision, development, operation, and maintenance of **alternative transportation facilities** and services including the encouragement, education and enforcement of proper use of those facilities and services.” Alternative transportation explicitly includes bicycle routes and lanes, as well as pedestrian sidewalks and a mass transit system. The severance tax represents a dedicated revenue stream that will be used for the development of bicycle facilities and services. It is estimated to be \$230,000 for 2009 with an increase in future years. Becoming a Bicycle-Friendly Community is a priority for Conway. The same evening the Conway city council also passed a second resolution. The city adopted the League of American Bicyclists’ **Action Plan for Bicycle-Friendly Communities**. This Bicycle Master Plan is the first action taken to implement the full action plan to make Conway a Bicycle-Friendly Community. This bicycle master plan addresses the years (2009-2019) and will need to be revised accordingly at the end of this period.

## Mayor's Task Force for a Bicycle Friendly Community

Shortly after these resolutions were passed, the mayor formed a Task Force to implement this action plan. The Task Force was composed of representatives from the city government, the Conway police, the local public schools and colleges/university, the owner of the local bicycle shop, and a number of avid bicycling enthusiasts. The main job of the Task Force was to create this master bicycle plan for the city of Conway. The Task Force also began work on a bicycle facilities standards and a bicycle network plan, a job of the engineering and planning committee. Other committees were formed to address education, enforcement, encouragement and evaluation. (See appendix #1, Membership of the Mayor's Task Force for a Bicycle Friendly-Community.)

### I. Summary of existing conditions

**Physical Characteristics:** The City of Conway is located in a relatively flat area with slight ridges on the north and south; the west side stretches nearly to the Arkansas River. In general, the city's terrain is very suited for bicycling, with easy access to the county for serious recreational riding and relatively flat terrain for easy commuting in town. Man-made features obstructing bicycling include the Union Pacific railroad

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that runs through town, 16 crossings; Interstate 40 (with four interchanges) presents serious challenges for cyclists to get to the East side of town where some of the newer shopping is located; and a few major state highways that run through town: Highway 365 (Harkrider Drive), Highway 64 (parts of Oak, Caldwell and Prince streets), Highway 286 (Dave Ward Dr). Aside from these areas, Conway has many quiet and wide neighborhood streets in "old Conway." Cycling in the core of the city is relatively easy and does not involve crossing any major highways; one can get from The Ride bicycle shop to Hendrix College, to downtown Conway, to Central Baptist College, to UCA on relatively wide streets with little traffic. Cycling completely across the city from north to south does present some obstacles; to access the city on the north side, one must negotiate some major intersections, e.g. Harkrider and Washington, and then toward the south side, crossing Dave Ward Dr. is problematic. Traveling from west to east is much more difficult, and one must negotiate the interstate on the east side as well as a number of heavily traveled major city thoroughfares on the west side, e.g. Prince St. or College Ave. One west-to-east route is Tyler St. on the north side of town which is relatively accommodating, if narrow in some places, but on the east side of the city Tyler dead ends at Hendrix College and to continue east one must cross Harkrider and use Siebenmorgan Rd, a narrow, heavily traveled road unsafe for bicyclists. Much remains to be done to enable bicyclists to travel the outer edges of the growing city of Conway.

Population characteristics: The city of Conway has grown rapidly over the last 2 decades, and now has a population of approximately 53,000. However, accommodations for bicyclists did not play a role in development plans; consequently, Conway is not yet a Bicycle-Friendly Community.

## II. Summary of Existing Bicycling Facilities

Conway does not have an extensive network of bicycle facilities at present, but it has experimented with some designated bicycle lanes (2.5 miles) and has a two mile long multi-purpose paved path (Tucker Creek Trail) on the west side of the city. The first designated bike lane was developed on the west side of town as subdivisions and schools were located on west College Ave. and Padgett Rd. The bike lane there is on the west-bound side of the road only, is 6 ft wide, and is marked with standard bicyclist symbols. It is used by pedestrians, joggers and motor scooters as well as bicyclists; it is also used for parking by parents picking up and dropping off children at Ruth Doyle School. Given that it is only on one side, it presents a serious problem for bicyclists. Should they ride into traffic or use the other side of the road? The use of the bike lanes for parking and picking up during school hours also defeats efforts

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to encourage children to ride to school. It is the opinion of the Task Force that an east-bound bike lane should be added, or (if this is too expensive) sharrows should be placed on the east bound side of the road so it is clear that cyclists should ride with the traffic. Some other way to allow motorists to pick up children at school also needs to be arranged.

Some sections of Country Club road were striped with bike lanes recently. These lanes range from too narrow (3 ft in some places) to 5 ft, and at present are not indicated as bicycle lanes. Pedestrians and motor scooters also use these lanes. The lanes on Country Club need to be marked as bike lanes. The City has agreed to purchase the stencil to mark Conway's bike lanes.

The two mile-long Tucker Creek multipurpose trail has been a great success. It is sufficiently wide (12 ft) and safe to ride, if sometimes clogged with walkers and joggers. Although used mainly for family rides and walkers/joggers, it serves as the first phase of a planned network of paths that will help bicyclists get through the city without negotiating major roads. (See Bike Network map)

There is one biking/hiking trail at Cadron Settlement Park, three miles west of Conway, with slightly over 6 miles of trails. The city leases and maintains the park, with volunteers helping to maintain the biking/hiking trails. There has been discussion of the development of another bike trail park on the north side of Conway in the area of the old landfill.

The city of Conway has only two bike racks in place: One is at the city's public McGee Center, and the other is at the start of Tucker Creek multi-purpose path on Salem Road. We count four at local businesses. More bike racks need to be installed.

The city's three institutions of higher learning and local secondary schools have tried to keep up with a growing demand for bicycle parking.

Central Baptist College (500 students) has four bike racks (10 bikes per rack). There has been an increase of biking on campus, and a number of students have expressed an interest in more mountain biking trails.

Hendrix College (1300 students) has at least 16 bike racks and a count in February 2009 indicated over 150 bikes on campus. Hendrix does not have any dedicated trails. Mountain bikes are available for checkout by members of the Hendrix Community from the Hendrix Wellness and Athletic Center. And the center conducts multiple spin classes weekly. Cruiser bikes are available for checkout by students at the Hendrix Library. Faculty teach cycling or tri-sport's classes through the Kinesiology

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Department.

The University of Central Arkansas (12,000 students) has a large number of bike racks, enough by one estimate to accommodate over 1200 bikes. The racks are spread throughout the campus and consist of U-racks embedded in concrete and more traditional self-standing racks that engage a front wheel of a bicycle. Bicycle usage on campus has increased markedly.

The local public schools have limited bicycle parking facilities, most have only one rack to accommodate 10 bikes; the total number of bike racks at public schools in Conway is 18. Interestingly, our one senior high school has none. As in many municipalities in the nation, bicycling to school has fallen off in Conway, largely because it is not encouraged or accommodated with safe routes to schools.

### III. Projects and Activities at Present

Bicycle facilities: The city has designated funds from its current budget to expand bicycle lanes and other bicycling facilities in Conway. At present, there are a number of projects on-going. Significant stretches of West Tyler, South German Lane, Salem Rd. and Favre Lane have been striped with designated bike lanes. These lanes meet the recommended width of AASHTO (5 ft), and appear to be our best efforts to date; the city followed preliminary recommendations from the Bicycle Task Force. At present, they only need to be clearly identified as bike lanes. With these lanes the city will have approximately 6 miles of striped bike lanes. The City is committed to expanding the bicycle network significantly over the next 2 years, and over the next five years we plan to have approximately 50 miles of bike routes designated either with striped lanes or sharrows.

The city has committed the funds (\$1.5 million) to extend the Tucker Creek multi-purpose paved trail further through the heart of Conway heading north (see Bike Route map), for a total distance of 3.6 miles. Additional funds to extend the trail have been received from the Arkansas State Highway commission. There are plans for other multi-purpose paths throughout Conway. Mayor Townsell envisions a “series of paved trails away from motorist traffic connecting various parks and green spaces throughout the city.” These will “serve as freeways for biking and foot traffic; the city roads with added bike lanes, better sidewalks for pedestrian-only traffic, offering further connectivity to destinations such as UCA, hospitals and schools.”

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The city is currently researching bicycle racks, and plans to install more throughout the downtown area of Conway. The Conway Chamber of Commerce has committed to work with a local steel fabricator to design and produce a custom Conway bike rack; the Chamber and City will then encourage local businesses to purchase and install these racks.

Bicycle Projects and Educational Institutions: Hendrix College students have begun a bicycle loaner program; they call it the Hendrix Bike Revolution. Students can check out bikes from Bailey Library in the same way books are lent. There are 5-10 functional bikes, with at least 3 or 4 of those checked out at any given point. One can check them out for 3 days, but many students keep them for longer. That program has no facility in which to repair these bikes, so it relies upon external mechanics to maintain its fleet. There is demand for more bicycles, and for a campus repair shop. There is a lack of space to expand the program. Funding for this comes from the student senate. The group is also working with Public Safety to conduct a campus wide bicycle registration system. Faculty and staff at UCA are working to start a similar program using abandon bicycles.

The local public schools have begun to integrate bicycle safety instruction into the curriculum to various degrees ranging from a one hour-program with a follow-up bicycle rodeo/skilled riding event, to a general overview of bicycle safety as part of a physical education class. Much more remains to be done.

Safe Routes to Schools: In 2007, Conway Public Schools applied for \$659,381 in Safe Routes to School funds from the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department. The district's application included plans for a multi-phased sidewalk project, traffic control signs, and crosswalk markings. The district was awarded \$76,360 in Safe Routes funding; these grant proceeds will be used primarily to construct a sidewalk that will provide access from Siebenmorgen Rd. to Theodore Jones Elementary school via Freyaldenhoven Ln. Future applications are planned to increase bicycle facilities for safe routes to schools.

Bicycle Advocacy: Local bicycle enthusiasts have formed an advocacy group for bicycling: Conway Advocates for Bicycling (CAB). The group meets regularly and intends to gain 501 c 3 status from the Internal Revenue Service as a nonprofit. CAB hosts a website dedicated to advancing the interests of bicyclists, See the web site [www.CycleConway.org](http://www.CycleConway.org). Over 65 individuals have registered on the site. To date, the group has already moved forward on a number of important projects that will help advance Conway's efforts to become a Bicycle-Friendly Community. The group already has two League of American Bicyclists certified bicycle safety instructors,

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and plans are underway for educational projects in the elementary school and for interested citizens. CAB sponsors RideCivil events on the last Friday of each month; this event consists of a group of riders riding through Conway in a safe and civil fashion; to date, motorists have been respectful. CAB has started an effort to recycle old bikes for further use. Beginning with children's bikes, CAB sponsored a "Bikes for Tykes" event in December 2008, collecting and distributing over 60 refurbished bicycles (and a helmet) to local children. Some adult bikes were also distributed. Plans are to develop and maintain a bicycle recycling center with a bike loaner program for the city of Conway modeled after the one at Hendrix College cited above.

Regular Bicycle Events and Activities: Besides the new events sponsored by CAB, for a number of years now Erik Leamon, the owner of the local bicycle shop, The Ride, has organized rides for the more serious amateur riders in Conway, as well as regular bicycle safety classes. His website serves as a great resource for local bicyclists. (See [therideonline.net](http://therideonline.net)) Erik has also helped organize a now annual June event in conjunction with the city: the Toad Suck Triathlon. Fred Phillips has worked with the City to bring this event to Conway on an annual basis. Erik was also instrumental in starting the annual Tour de Toad, a now regular part of Toad Suck Daze events (Toad Suck Daze is the city's family fun festival held each May in downtown Conway.) The Tour features short, medium and long rides in the country side surrounding Conway. It is sponsored by the Faulkner County Literacy Council in early May. Another regular event is the Conway Kids Triathlon, sponsored by First Security Bank and the Conway running club, see: [www.conwaykidstri.com](http://www.conwaykidstri.com). Finally, beginning in 2008, Conway hosted the Arkansas State Championship Criterion Races with a little over 100 riders participating. \$1,500 in prize money and 15 Championship Jerseys were distributed. 11 races were held. Plans are underway for races in 2009. *Conway is fast becoming known for a wide variety of regular bicycling activities.*

### IV. Goals and Policy Recommendations

These goals and policy recommendations are designed to realize the Action Plan for a Bicycle-Friendly Community and to address other matters related to becoming an official League of American Bicyclists Bicycle-Friendly Community.

GOAL 1: **Establish** a structure for implementing Conway's bicycle master plan.

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Objective 1: Provide for the implementation of the bicycle master plan by providing support, resources, and staff responsible for coordination.

Policy recommendations:

The city shall assign staff to implement the bicycle plan.

The city shall appoint a permanent Bicycle Advisory Board (BAB) consisting of at least six volunteers (two of which should be associated with the local bicycle advocacy group) who work with designated city staff to implement the bicycle plan. (See appendix #2, draft Bicycle Advisory Board resolution.)

The city shall annually review progress on its bicycle plan, with input and participation from BAB and the citizens of Conway.

The city shall work with BAB as it considers expenditures for development and improvement of bicycle facilities in Conway.

The city shall promote inter-institutional and inter-governmental coordination between the city, UCA, Hendrix College, CBC, Conway schools, Conway Chamber of Commerce, Faulkner County government, and the State of Arkansas to facilitate the planning and implementation process.

**GOAL 2: Develop** bicycle routes, paved trails, mountain bike trails, and other safe physical facilities for bicycle transportation.

Objective 1: Expand the amount of bicycle facilities (designated routes, racks, etc) in Conway.

Policy recommendations:

The city shall work with BAB to increase designated bicycle routes so that a significant bicycle network is in place providing safe access to all of Conway.

The city shall work with BAB to monitor progress on a yearly basis.

The city shall instruct Parks and Recreation to increase projects which include bicycle facilities and educational activities.

The city shall pursue grant opportunities that promise to increase bicycling in Conway, e.g. Safe Routes to Schools and Robert Wood Johnson's Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities.

Objective 2: Establish standards for the city to use when planning and developing bicycling facilities.

Policy recommendations:

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The city shall adopt the Bicycle Facility Standards (see PDF document) as developed by the BFC Task Force or otherwise consult with BAB.

To identify roads which should be considered for bicycle facility development or improvement, the city shall adopt the plans and priorities set forth in the Bicycle Route Network Plan (see PDF document) or otherwise consult with BAB.

Objective 3: Include planning for the development and improvement of bicycle facilities in all transportation projects, zoning, commercial site plans and subdivision regulation within the city.

Policy recommendations:

The city shall adopt Complete Streets principles (see appendix #3, draft Complete Streets Ordinance)

The city shall include such safety amenities as appropriate lighting, signal devices capable of detecting bicycles, regular maintenance of bicycle facilities, secure bicycle parking, appropriate signage, and the use of accident data to determine the types of improvements needed.

The city shall insure that paved bicycle trails/paths are developed throughout the city as far as possible to connect to primary access routes and to central destinations.

**GOAL 3: Coordinate** with local organizations and institutions to develop programs to **educate** the public regarding Arkansas bicycle traffic laws and safe bicycle operation.

Objective 1: Implement a program of public awareness through city offices and departments working with the BAB, the local bicycling group, CAB, (Conway Advocates for Bicycling), and public and private schools and colleges in Conway.

Policy recommendations:

The city through BAB shall coordinate with CAB, UCA, Hendrix and CBC to develop programs to educate and inform students about bicycle traffic safety. Include secondary schools, civic organizations, neighborhood organizations and other relevant parties.

The city through BAB shall seek out and develop opportunities to cooperate with local civic organizations, business and related groups to promote observance of traffic safety laws, helmet usage, safe bicycling operating practices and related information.

**GOAL 4: Establish an active law enforcement** program regarding Arkansas traffic laws.

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Objective 1: Establish law enforcement programs to enhance the enforcement of Arkansas traffic laws with regard to the rights and responsibilities of bicyclists and motorists.

Policy recommendations:

The city shall request that the Conway Police Department (CPD) adopt an active policy of enforcement with particular attention to both the rights and responsibilities of bicyclists and motorists.

The city shall encourage the CPD to adopt an on-going training program regarding bicycle specific traffic laws for all of the officers to complete.

The city shall encourage the CPD to continue to improve and development its officers on bikes program.

The city shall encourage the CPD to serve on BAB.

**GOAL 5: Encourage** the citizens of Conway to bicycle frequently as an alternative mode of transportation and for recreation.

Objective 1: The city and the BAB shall work to significantly increase the level of bicycle use over the next 10 years.

Policy recommendations:

The city and BAB shall work with Conway Advocates for Bicycling (CAB) to implement events, activities and projects that increase bicycling, e.g. neighborhood rides, tours, educational events, bike-rack design competition, bicycle loaner programs, etc.

The City shall adopt resolutions and ordinances which support bicycle usage, facilities and events.

The City shall devise means to encourage its own employees to bike to work and insure that all employees are aware of efforts to make Conway a Bicycle-Friendly Community.

The City shall work with the Conway Area Chamber of Commerce to encourage local businesses to implement bike facilities and to encourage bicycling.

The city shall promote bicycling through the publication of a map of bicycle facilities in Conway.

### Performance Measures

The Bicycle Master Plan Performance Measures chart (see appendix #4) indicates a number of measures given baseline date. Each goal has a number of performance measures tied to it with performance targets.

### Bicycle Route Network and Map

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The Bicycle Route Network (see PDF document) is a result of an extensive review of road conditions in Conway and creates a network of routes that will allow good access to all part of Conway. It indicates preferred bicycle routes, prioritizing the development of a bicycle network over the next 10 years. The focus was on arterials and collectors, and connecting to major destinations. The draft map shows the current and future bike network in Conway. The core section of Conway is designated a "Bicycle-Friendly Area."

### Bicycle Safety

Conway PD provides the following recent information on accidents involving bicycles. From January 1 through November 6 of 2008, the Police logged 12 accidents, none fatal. Accidents appear to involve both motorists and bicyclists at fault. UCA police report two accidents in 2008; one accident was also recorded by Conway PD.

### Implementation

After appointing a Bicycle Advisory Board (BAB), the mayor will direct BAB to create bylaws and adopt a regular meeting schedule. City staff will be included in BAB meetings. BAB will work with city staff to begin to implement the priorities as indicated in the Bicycle Network plan.

**Implementation Strategies** For each of the above goals we consider how we will actually achieve that goal. This is not an exhaustive list.

Strategies for GOAL 1: **Establish** a structure for implementing Conway's bicycle master plan.

- Establish a city bicycle coordinator staff position and set up BAB.
- Hold an annual public forum to allow for exchange of ideas and input about the city's progress on becoming a Bicycle-Friendly Community.
- Prepare an annual report summarizing activities, expenditures and progress.

Strategies for GOAL 2: **Develop** bicycle routes, trails and other safe physical facilities for bicycle transportation.

- Develop a plan for prioritizing work on bicycle lanes and bike paths.
- Ensure that bike routes are an integral part of street design.
- Require compliance with bike facilities policies for new development, both residential and commercial.
- Add municipal bicycling parking facilities in the downtown area.
- Develop guidelines for bicycle parking at commercial and public buildings.

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- Develop standard pavement marking for identifying bike routes and for intersections.
- Develop standards for signal timing and detection to facilitate movement of bicycles at intersections.
- Establish bicycle route inspection and maintenance procedures.

Strategies for GOAL 3: **Coordinate** with local organizations and institutions to develop programs to **educate** the public regarding Arkansas bicycle traffic laws and safe bicycle operation.

- The city will encourage age-appropriate bicycle safety instruction in the local schools.
- The city will collaborate with local civic organizations to contribute in appropriate ways to the Bicycle-Friendly Community efforts.
- The City will support CAB efforts to educate children and adults on bicycle safety.
- The city will coordinate the distribution of bicycle safety and legal information.
  - Through Conway Corporation mailings, where bicycle are sold, in new student orientation packets at the schools and colleges, in information given to new residents, etc.

Strategies for GOAL 4: Establish an active law **enforcement** program regarding Arkansas traffic laws.

- The Conway Police Department will have an in-service training module regarding bicycle specific traffic laws for all of the officers to complete.
- The CPD will study statistics with a goal of reducing accidents.

Strategies for GOAL 5: **Encourage** the citizens of Conway to bicycle frequently as an alternative mode of transportation and for recreation.

- The city, in conjunction with CAB, will help sponsor events and activities every May, National Bicycle Month, e.g. a bike to work week, tours, bicycle rodeos, etc.
- The city will adopt a bicycle helmet ordinance for all ages.
- The city will produce a bicycle network map.