

May 4, 2017

## Best Practices

### Making Ashland More Bike and Pedestrian Friendly

#### Introduction

The bicycle is one of the most efficient modes of transportation and access to a bicycle can increase a person's mobility tenfold, allowing them to travel distances that would have been much too far by foot. This increased mobility that a bike offers comes at a very low cost, when compared to automobiles. Bicycles are both cheaper to purchase and maintain than their four wheeled counterparts, and need less infrastructure than cars. This makes the bicycle a very attractive option for many people.

Although bikes and cars use the same roadways, they do not have to compete for space and functionality. Cyclists are often pitted against drivers, and perceived as wanting to own the road but this does not have to be the case. Instead of competing, bikes and cars can complement each other because they each fill a different travel niche. Bicycles are almost always used for traveling short distances; these trips usually are around 20 minutes in duration and between two and five miles long. These are distances that are a bit too far to walk but hard to justify using gas if the weather allows for biking instead<sup>i</sup>.

Like many towns of its size, Ashland has the ability to capitalize on the short trips that cyclists tend to take. It is ideal for Ashland because within the city, one is never that far from most popular destinations. This means that many things are within a short bike ride or walk away<sup>ii</sup>.

In order for Ashland to capitalize on the close proximity of attractions, the city must ensure that cyclists and pedestrians feel safe and comfortable while using the city's infrastructure. It would be beneficial to both Ashland's residents, and the seasonal tourist population, if the city was more bike and pedestrian friendly, making people less reliant on their cars for transportation. In order to do this, a multi-faceted approach is required. The first step would be designating bike routes and having them marked and mapped. The second step would

be teaching both cyclists and motorists about how to navigate these routes. Through a combination of infrastructure and education, Ashland can become a pedestrian and cycling hub.

### Why Make Ashland More Pedestrian and Bike Friendly

Ashland's size lends itself to being very accessible by bicycle and foot, with many of its attractions being within walking or biking distance of each other. Because of the close proximity of attractions, enhancing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure would serve to open up Ashland for many people. There are a variety of obstacles that will need to be evaluated and addressed in order to make Ashland more navigable by multi-modal transportation. These obstacles include educating both pedestrians and drivers about their rights, and increasing awareness that bikes and pedestrians may be present. Other obstacles that need to be analyzed are things such as road conditions and snow removal.

### Recommended Bike Routes and Lanes

There has been much discussion around protected bike lanes and how they shape a transportation network. Protected bike lanes are viewed as the gold standard in alternative transportation, they are held in such high regard because they minimize the potential for collisions between cyclists and drivers. Although protected lanes are fantastic, there are many other steps that require significantly less infrastructure that Ashland could initiate first to increase bicycle ridership.

One of the ways that Ashland can add bike infrastructure while conforming to a budget, would be to establish "Bike Boulevards" or routes. These are streets with low traffic density that run to popular destinations or connect to a broader network of bike trails and lanes. They often parallel larger arterial streets. Roads that are chosen as Bike Boulevards are often given the right-of-way, adjusting stop signs whenever possible to allow for continuous flow of travel by bike. These Bike Boulevards should be designated with their own signage informing both bikes and cars that it is a designated route and there is a high likelihood of encountering cyclists on these streets<sup>iii</sup>.

## Recommended Streets

### North-South Routes:

Beaser Avenue: Beaser Avenue is vital to the success of a comprehensive bicycling network in Ashland. It is so important because it connects Ashland High school, Ashland Elementary School, Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, and the Memorial Medical Center to the surrounding neighborhoods as well as providing easy access to Main Street and the lakefront. Making Beaser more bicycle friendly would provide greater opportunities for both students and working professionals to commute by bicycle. Additionally, Beaser connects to the preexisting bike lanes on Binsfield Road linking to the Lakefront Trail via the Beaser Avenue bike route.

In order to make Beaser safer for cycling it would be advantageous to add bike lanes on both sides of the street. Bike lanes would need to be painted alongside the designated parking on both the southbound and northbound lanes. Beaser is 44ft wide; a 13ft allowance for parking lane and bike lane combined would leave 9ft wide driving lanes. The recommended width for parking lanes and striped bike lanes is 13ft but the City might want to consider a 12ft combined parking and bike lane on Beaser which would allow for 10ft wide driving lanes<sup>iv</sup>.

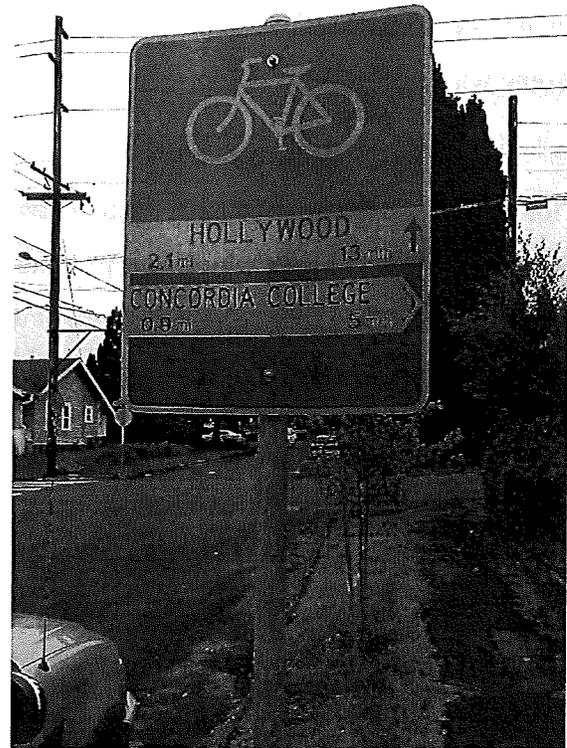
For bike lanes to span the full distance of Beaser, the medians in front of the high school and hospital would need to be removed. These medians were intended to slow traffic by narrowing the roadway. Without the medians, the narrowing of the traffic lanes to 10ft to accommodate bike lanes would provide natural traffic calming, encouraging drivers to slowdown.

Sanborn Avenue: Sanborn Avenue would benefit from adding bike lanes from Maple Lane to Lakeshore Drive. Sanborn would create a new bicycle loop in Ashland that would increase access to the hospital, high school, elementary school and Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College. It would be utilized by both commuters and recreational riders.

9th Avenue West: 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue West would be designated as a bike Boulevard. It would serve to connect the Safe Routes to School trails for Ashland High School and Ashland Elementary School to the surrounding neighborhoods. It would run from the Safe Routes to School trails to Lake Shore Drive, where bicyclists could meet the Waterfront Trail. With Bike Boulevards established, bicyclists would be able to use the full lane because traffic in residential areas is

moving at slow speeds. One prime Bike Boulevard would be 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue West due to the limited amount of traffic and the low number of stop signs. The Bike Boulevard would be designated with both pavement markings and signs that included wayfinding for attractions and destinations that bicyclists could reach by using 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue. These attractions could be things such as South Shore Brewery, Black Cat Coffeehouse or other nearby attractions.

### Example of Bike Boulevard Markings



<https://www.pdx.edu/ibpi/sites/www.pdx.edu/ibpi/files/styles/large/public/bikeboulevardpavementmarking.jpg>

<http://www.cicle.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/portland1.jp>

Chapple Avenue: Chapple Avenue, much like 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue West, would be designated as a Bicycle Boulevard. It would run from 11<sup>th</sup> Street West to Main Street. This route would serve to connect neighborhoods in close proximity to Chapple to Ashland's main shopping and commercial district, Main Street. People could easily bike to destinations such as the Chequamegon Co-op, and Ashland Baking Company. The route would be marked with both pavement markings and signs like 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue West.

Vaughn Avenue: Vaughn Avenue between 11<sup>th</sup> Street West and Main Street would be an ideal Bicycle Boulevard because it could provide a safe bicycling route that would connect Vaughn's neighborhoods to the library. This would provide a safe way for children to bike to the library. However, the present condition of the road surface of Vaughn Avenue is very poor, making it unsafe to ride on. If it were to be resurfaced in the future it should be considered for a bike route.

2nd Avenue: 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue West, between 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Depot Drive, could be a designated bike route. This would connect Northland College to the downtown district allowing for easy travel between the College and locations such as Super One grocery store and Main Street. It would be marked with both pavement markings and road signs to clearly identify it as a bike route where bicyclists could use the full lane.

5<sup>th</sup> Avenue West: <sup>East</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue West between 11<sup>th</sup> Street West and Lakeshore Drive, would make for a good bike route because it would connect these neighborhoods easily to the Tri-County Corridor and 11<sup>th</sup> Street which runs past the middle school allowing for students to bike to and from school safely. It would be delineated with both pavement markings and road signs alerting cars to the presence of bicyclists.

7<sup>th</sup> Avenue West: <sup>East</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 11<sup>th</sup> Street West and Lake Shore Drive would serve the same purpose as 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue West allowing for students to reach the middle school by bike. It would be delineated as a Bike Boulevard with road signs in conjunction with pavement markings.

11<sup>th</sup> Avenue East: 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue would be designated as a bike route between Lake Shore Drive and the Tri-County Corridor. This would allow people to move from the east side of Bay City Creek to the north side via the Tri-County Corridor by providing them with easy access to the corridor. It would be marked as a Bike Boulevard with on pavement markings and road signs to alert drivers.

14th Avenue East: 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue East between Lake Shore Drive and the Tri-County Corridor would be a bike route that would serve the same purpose as 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue West. Both 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue East and 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue could help make it heart of the downtown district more accessible to citizens living on the east side of town.

## North-South Streets

11<sup>th</sup> Street West: 11<sup>th</sup> Street West between Beaser and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, is best served by adding bike lane to both sides. The extra expense of adding bike lanes would be a benefit on 11<sup>th</sup> Street because it would connect the Safe Routes to School trails to the neighborhoods on the south side of Ellis Avenue. It would serve as a main bike thoroughfare for students biking to school whether that be Northland College, Ashland High School, Ashland Elementary School or Ashland Middle School, along with allowing working professionals at the hospital an easy route to reach Beaser. 11<sup>th</sup> Street would have painted, 4ft wide bike lanes running both directions. Because of these lanes, 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue would need to have signs prohibiting parking in order to not obstruct bike traffic. The bike lanes would be marked with both pavement markings and road signs.

## Example of Bike Lane Markings

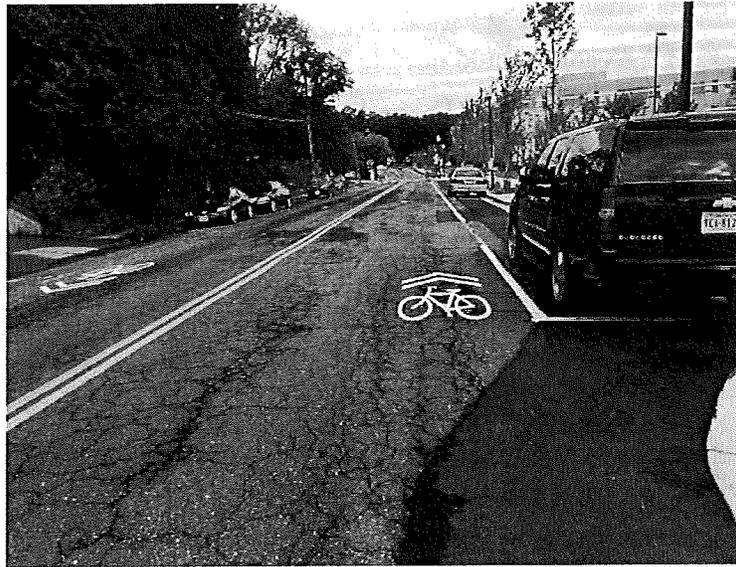


<http://www.americantrails.org/photoGalleries/cool/11images/02.jpg>

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/24/Road\\_sign\\_-\\_BIKE\\_LANE\\_-\\_BIKES\\_ONLY\\_%28Manhattan%2C\\_October\\_4\\_2008%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/24/Road_sign_-_BIKE_LANE_-_BIKES_ONLY_%28Manhattan%2C_October_4_2008%29.jpg)

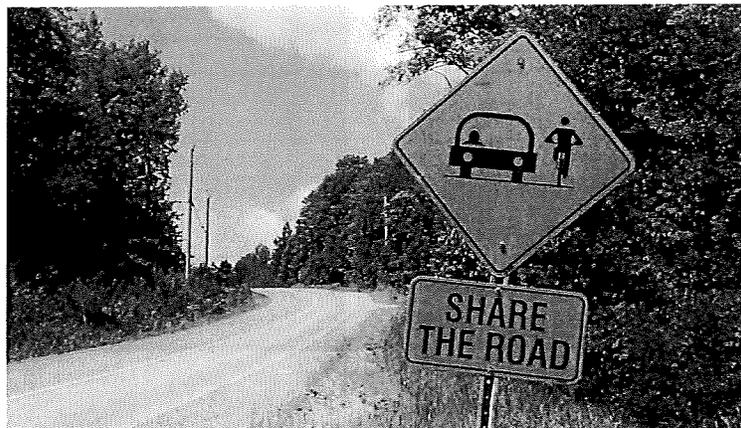
3<sup>rd</sup> Street West: 3<sup>rd</sup> Street West between Beaser Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue has the potential to become a route for bikes. The pavement seems to be sufficiently wide if you are traveling eastbound towards 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. However, traveling westbound the roadway is too narrow due to the offset centerline at 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. If the centerline can be shifted to the middle of the street it may allow for bicycles going both directions without inhibiting parking and car travel. The roadway would be marked with “Share the Road” signage and sharrows (a shared-lane marking).

Example of Sharrow Use alongside Parking



<http://washcycle.typepad.com/.a/6a00d8345198c369e201bb085e8660970d-600wi>

Example of Share the Road Sign



[https://cdn.shutterstock.com/shutterstock/videos/2819083/thumb/1.jpg?i10c=img.resize\(height:160\)](https://cdn.shutterstock.com/shutterstock/videos/2819083/thumb/1.jpg?i10c=img.resize(height:160))

Main Street: Main Street is the heart of Ashland and home to many of the destinations that people wish to bike to. Because of this, it is important that there is room for cyclists on Main Street. In order to make Main Street safe, it would be marked with signs allowing bicyclists to use the full lane and sharrows showing cars that it is likely that they will encounter a bicycle. These markings will serve two purposes, it will allow bikes to be far enough away from parked cars so that they are not at risk of being hit by a door, and it will force drivers to slow down and watch for the presence of bikes. This slowing of traffic will also help to make pedestrians feel safer while walking and crossing Main Street.

Example of Sharrow and Use Full Lane Sign



<https://rayatkinsonplans.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/sharrow-with-bikes-may-use-full-lane.png>

Junction Road: Junction Road should be made a bike route between Sanborn Avenue and Prentice Park. This is a vital connection because it would allow for riders and walkers on the Tri-County Corridor to take Junction Road to Prentice Park connecting the entire Lakefront Trail network. In order to ensure the safety of bicyclists, the first section of the Tri-County Corridor should be paved and a cut-through trail should be added from the Tri-County Corridor to Junction Road. This would allow for bicyclists to cross at the cross walk then cut over to Junction Road instead of trying to cross on the diagonal or ride against traffic.

Maple Lane: Maple Lane is well suited to become a bike route. This is especially true with its planned resurfacing this summer (2017). If Maple Lane were to be designated as a bike route, it would allow for a connected bike network because it would extend the access from the bike lanes on Binsfield Road connecting them to the recommended bike lanes on Sanborn Avenue. This would create a much more interconnected bicycle network for both commuters and recreational cyclists in Ashland.

### Walking in Ashland

Ashland's proximity to Lake Superior make it an inviting place to get outside and walk to enjoy the natural beauty of the area. The Lakefront Trail has made the lake easily accessible, but once you leave the downtown district, sidewalks become more sporadic with points of disconnect and dead ends occurring frequently. These interruptions make it challenging for individuals to walk from one place to another without needing to cross the street because the sidewalk ended or walking in the street because sidewalks are not present in their neighborhood. The network of sidewalks is even more cut-off come winter when the sidewalks become covered in snow. The owner of the property that adjoins the sidewalk is responsible for removing the snow and keeping it cleared. This system can break down at times if someone is physically unable to remove the snow, or simply does not feel as though it should be their responsibility. This snow accumulation serves only to further break up walking routes making it difficult travel by foot.

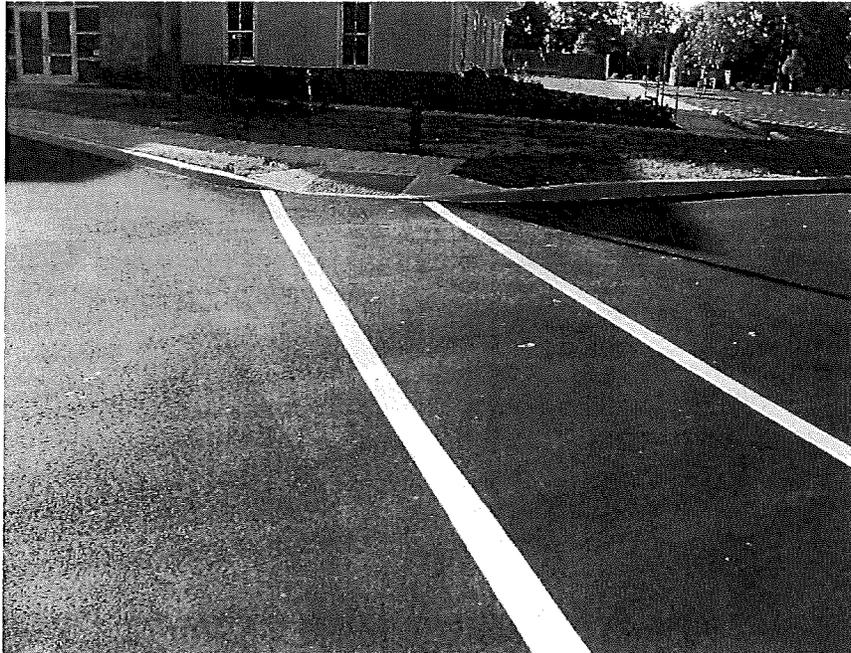
### Main Street

Main Street is the financial heart of Ashland, with many different options and attractions such as the Bay Theater, Vaughn Library, and South Shore Brewery. Many of the businesses on Main Street rely on foot traffic for their business. Although Main Street is set up well to walk from storefront to storefront, the winter weather and driving-centric design has led people to drive down the block instead of walking from one business to the next.

The cold weather in the winter is certainly a contributing factor to why people choose to drive instead of walk. In this climate, that is hard to avoid but there are things that could be done on Main Street in order to make it both more inviting and safer for pedestrians.

One of the first steps that can be taken to make Main Street both safer and more inviting for pedestrians is to change the style of cross walks and repaint them. Currently the cross walks are two painted parallel strips. While this kind of crosswalk clearly delineates to pedestrians where they should cross, they are not as easily visible to drivers. This is especially true when the crosswalk lines begin to fade.

#### Current Design of Ashland's Crosswalks



<http://zebrastripingnj.com/sites/default/files/images/Crosswalk.jpg>

In order to encourage walking, pedestrians must feel safe while crossing the street. One way to increase visibility of pedestrians is to adopt a new style of crosswalk. These new style should be easier to see from the driver's seat of a car and not just from the sidewalk.

One way of doing this would be through a public art project. This project could involve painting a scene in the cross walk. This would serve two purposes, first it would make the crosswalks more visible for drivers, and secondly they could add a unique sense of place to Main Street.

In order to begin making the crosswalks more visible in the downtown district, a crosswalk should be picked to be a pilot test for the new crosswalk design. The crosswalk at Vaughn Avenue and Main Street is well suited to be a pilot. It could have a reading or book

theme that connects it to the library which is on the corner. This would both make it more visible and tie it into one of the most important destinations on Main Street, the Vaughn Library. An example of a crosswalk that is inspired by books can be found below.

#### Example Alternative Crosswalk Design



<http://www.trbing.com/img-583b8849/turbine/ph-ag-belair-crosswalks-1116-20161127>

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<sup>i</sup> Andersen, Michael. "America's small towns have huge potential for bike transportation." America's small towns have huge potential for bike transportation | PeopleForBikes. Accessed May 24, 2017. <http://www.peopleforbikes.org/blog/entry/americas-small-towns-have-huge-potential-for-bike-transportation>.

<sup>ii</sup> Andersen, Michael. "America's small towns have huge potential for bike transportation." America's small towns have huge potential for bike transportation | PeopleForBikes. Accessed May 24, 2017. <http://www.peopleforbikes.org/blog/entry/americas-small-towns-have-huge-potential-for-bike-transportation>.

<sup>iii</sup> "Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks." Federal Highway Administration. December 2016. Accessed May 24, 2017. [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/publications/small\\_towns/fhwahep17024\\_1g.pdf](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/small_towns/fhwahep17024_1g.pdf).

<sup>iv</sup> "Wisconsin Bicycle Facility Design Handbook." Wisconsin Department of Transportation. January 2004. Accessed May 24, 2017. <http://wisconsindot.gov/Documents/projects/multimodal/bike/facility.pdf>.