



Licking County Bike Parking Project Increases Awareness for Biking in Downtown Area

At a Glance

According to the American Community Survey (2013-2017), approximately 20.5% of residents in the City of Newark are living at or below the federal poverty level. For many of the residents living in poverty, transportation is an issue. Without access to a vehicle or public transit system, many individuals rely on a bicycle. In 2019, Licking County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) partnered with Licking County Area Transportation Study (LCATS) and the City of Newark to improve bike infrastructure in downtown Newark by adding covered bike parking. As a result, 10 bike racks were installed in a downtown parking garage

Public Health Challenge

The City of Newark serves as the county seat, housing many of the county's social service agencies. Residents often

travel downtown for appointments, services, and daily errands. Currently there is no public transportation system in the county providing regular route services for residents. According to the National Transportation Database, approximately 7% of county households have no vehicle, with 60% of those households in Newark. While those living in poverty face severe issues with transportation and daily living, there is also concern among seniors and people with disabilities who do not have access to a vehicle. Not having access to transportation is a barrier for getting to everyday destinations like the grocery store or a doctor appointment. Some residents rely on a bicycle as their primary form of transportation. It is common to see bicycles around the square downtown on a typical day, so access to bike parking is important. With some residents biking year-round, a covered parking option provides protection against the elements.

Approach

In 2019, LCATS and CHC began discussing how to improve bike infrastructure in downtown Newark to make it more accommodating to bicyclists. Bike lanes and some bike racks were installed with the revitalization of the Newark Square laying some groundwork. Pre- and post-surveys were conducted to get a better idea of the community's perception of biking downtown and how bike-friendly they felt it was. Three themes emerged from the initial survey: bike parking, awareness for current bike parking, and bike safety. CHC approached the city about adding covered bike parking to be more accommodating to bicyclists commuting downtown. Rather than adding a stand-alone unit, it was decided to look at a parking garage located downtown and request permission from the county commissioners to add bike parking spaces.



Results

In July, the Licking County Board of Commissioners signed a resolution granting two spaces in the 2nd Street Parking Garage for bike parking. Ten bike racks were installed, providing covered parking for up to 20 bikes. While there are many bike racks downtown, surveys and observations showed they were not being used. LCATS created a bike rack inventory map showing 20 existing bike racks throughout the downtown area to raise awareness for current bike parking options. After the bike racks were installed and the map was shared, another survey was sent out for additional feedback. Of those who took the survey, 20% said they were likely to use the covered parking and 28.5% indicated it is easy to find a bike rack. To address bike safety, CHC worked with Toole Design Group to conduct an experiential ride centered around Newark's bicycle infrastructure. The workshop gave a mix of riders the opportunity to learn about bicycle safety and try riding on the streets and through roundabouts in downtown Newark.

What's Next

CHC and their partners are committed to working together on additional active transportation planning efforts in 2020, including a formal active transportation plan. The development of an active transportation plan will help to guide future projects over the next several years and set long-term goals. The community still expresses concerns around bike safety and understanding the laws that apply. Education on bike safety will be ongoing and incorporated in future initiatives.

"The new addition of safe and covered bike racks in the downtown area make leaving your bike during the day a safe and secure proposition and can encourage active commutes to work in downtown Newark."

—Tim Bubb,
Licking County Commissioner

Find Out More

Making bicycling safe and convenient are keys to improving public health, reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality and quality of life. Join the Licking County Wellness Coalition and learn more about how you can get directly involved in these efforts and support active transportation to get everyone moving more in your community.



Contact:

Carrie McKee
Licking County Health
Department
(740) 349-6497
cmckee@lickingcohealth.org