



To: Yixuan Lin, Monroe County Planning

From: Katie Darcy, AICP
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Re: Program & Campaign Review

Overview

The project team conducted a review of existing education and outreach programs and campaigns in Monroe County to identify successes and gaps in active transportation encouragement efforts. This memo identifies current and past initiatives, as well as regional examples that may serve as best practices for the County moving forward. Education, outreach, and encouragement programs can often be classified as incentives and giveaways, educational programming, advocacy, and supportive services. Each of these types of outreach are described in further detail below. Furthermore, each initiative described in this memo is identified with the type of program provided using the icons displayed below:



Incentives and Giveaways

Encouraging biking and walking can include monetary incentives or material giveaways. This may include employer incentives, such as waiving parking fees, or directly paying employees to bike/walk to work. Alternatively, giveaways, such as bikes, helmets, or safety gear can also help promote biking activity in a community.



Educational Programming

Educational opportunities can provide new riders with the awareness and confidence to start biking, whether for recreational purposes, physical exercise, commuting, or daily errands. Additionally, education programs can target existing riders to promote increased bike safety, expanded knowledge on bike repair, and other topics. While the specific topics may vary, the overall purpose of educational programming is to promote awareness of active transportation and support safe travel behavior.



Advocacy

Advocacy typically involves championing for policies for active transportation funding, encouraging better infrastructure, and political support for walking and biking. Advocacy can occur at the local, state, or national level. Activities may include contacting local and/or state representatives, attending local public meetings, signing petitions, and championing laws and ordinances that support active transportation.



Supportive Services



Supportive services seek to reduce barriers to walking and biking in communities by providing services or amenities that assist in active transportation uptake. Such services may include the development of walk and/or bike-friendly maps, trip planning assistance, providing information for beginner users, organized rides, and bike repair services.



Existing / Previous Local Initiatives


Black Girls Do Bike

The mission of the Black Girls Do Bike Rochester Chapter is to grow and support a community of women of color who share a passion for cycling. Their intent is to promote cycling to all women, but especially black women and girls. Part of their work is creating a comfortable and supportive environment where women can learn biking skills and foster a sense of community surrounding cycling. They provide training and education opportunities and organize rides to encourage more women of color to get out and bike. There is a strong emphasis on the mental health benefits of biking, and their goal is to break down barriers to entry in the larger cycling community.

Types of Programs:  

Common Ground Health

Common Ground Health is a health research and planning organization for the nine Finger Lakes counties in Upstate New York. Their primary work consists of conducting research regarding community health indicators and sharing information with the community regarding health trends across the Finger Lakes Region. Included in this research is the impact of active transportation on health indicators. For instance, in 2018, Common Ground Health conducted a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of the Rochester Bike Share program in partnership with Genesee Transportation Council (GTC). Part of Common Ground Health’s mission is also to engage with residents for educational purposes regarding community health. This includes extensive stakeholder outreach and partnerships throughout the region.

Types of Programs: 

Conkey Cruisers

Conkey Cruisers was a grass root neighborhood bicycling program in the City of Rochester. Their mission was to change the perception of exercise in City neighborhoods, and encourage residents to stay active, make healthy food choices, decrease obesity rates, and shed a positive light on local neighborhoods. Conkey Cruisers’ programming included bike giveaways, organized bike rides, neighborhood events, and educational outreach.

Types of Programs:   

Greater Rochester Off Road Cyclists (GROC)

GROC is a nonprofit organization striving to improve public lands and community wellness in the Genesee Region by providing great off-road cycling experiences, advocacy and education for trail users. They are a chapter of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) which encompasses the upper Genesee Valley region of New York State. Their objectives are to expand access to shared use trails and bike facilities, educate riders on responsible trail use, inspire more people to get involved in off-road cycling, and help the entire community reap the myriad benefits of the sport. GROC hosts weekly volunteer opportunities for trail stewardship, rides for cyclists of all ages and abilities, social events, youth clinics, and races throughout the cycling season.

Types of Programs:   



R Community Bikes

R Community Bikes (RCB) is a 501(c)3 organization that collects and repairs bicycles and distributes them for free to Rochester’s most vulnerable populations. The organization distributes over 2,000 bicycles annually and provides repair services for those bikes. They also distribute tricycles for disabled community members and provide bicycles and repair services for many community organizations, including church groups, youth centers, and neighborhood associations. The purpose of their work is to ensure that all community members have reliable transportation options, regardless of income or background.

Types of Programs:



Reconnect Rochester

Reconnect Rochester is a non-profit organization that champions the use of alternative modes of transportation, including biking, walking, and transit. Reconnect Rochester hosts several programs in pursuit of a more accessible multimodal transportation environment in the Greater Rochester area. These include a variety of education and training programs, ranging from youth programs, bike commuting, winter cycling. Their staff will also host custom training opportunities for specific organizations such as workplaces, college campuses, and community groups.

They also host a variety of community events throughout the calendar year, such as the Rochester Street Films festival, Park(ing) day, Bike to Work Day, and several weekly community bike rides. Historically, the organization has undertaken several tactical urbanism efforts as well, including painting crosswalks, and installing cubes adjacent to bus stops within the Rochester area for low-cost seating.

Since 2018 Reconnect has run a Complete Streets Makeover program, which is supported by a team of partners including governmental entities, community organizations, and professional consultants. One location is selected annually through a nomination process. This location then undergoes a community workshop and a tactical urbanism event which includes street painting and temporary traffic calming features. Speed data is collected prior to and following project implementation to demonstrate traffic calming effectiveness in each location.

In addition to their many programs, Reconnect provides many resources to community members online, including maps, data, and other information pertaining to active transportation in the community. They also are active at existing community events and advocate for multimodal transportation at the state and local levels.

Recently, Reconnect launched the 20 Minutes by Bike program, which presents a series of “bike shed” maps that illustrate how far you can get by bike in 20 minutes for various areas throughout Monroe County, including Downtown Rochester, Irondequoit, Brighton, Pittsford, the University of Rochester, and Rochester General Hospital.

Types of Programs:



Rochester Bicycling Club

The Rochester Bicycling Club (RBC) was founded in 1967, and its mission is to “promote the use of bicycles for sport, recreation, health, and transportation.” They are advocates for cyclists’ rights and safety. The RBC hosts hundreds of rides annually within the Rochester area, as well as the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions. They also host social events such as dinners, meetings, and an awards banquet in the spring. The RBC has historically also been involved in the “Adopt-a-Highway” program, partnering with the GTC to develop bike-friendly maps and ad campaigns, creating




signage to promote helmet usage on the Canal Trail, and coordinating with NYSDOT on roadway design. They have also given out grant funding and awards to local entities to support biking.

Their website hosts information for cyclists regarding equipment maintenance, and safety. They also host several clinics annually to educate cyclists on a variety of topics, such as using GPS, fixing flat tires, repairing common bike problems, going on long-distance bike rides, and more. They coordinate with many other local bike advocacy groups, such as Reconnect Rochester, Black Girls Do Bike, and the Rochester Twilight Festival hosted by MVP Health.

Types of Programs:   


Rochester Bike Week

Rochester Bike Week is a community-wide ten-day event that offers a wide variety of events for all ages and levels of expertise. The event is organized by Reconnect Rochester, and supported by Monroe County, the City of Rochester, and several other local organizations. Bike Week is intended to celebrate the region’s existing bike community and encourage new riders to take up biking for commuting and recreational purposes. Typical events include Bike Tours, organized rides, Bike to Work Day, and the MVP Rochester Twilight Criterium, a popular local bike race through Downtown Rochester.

Types of Programs: 



Rochester Walks!

Rochester Walks! was a past initiative implemented by the Center for Community Health and Action for a Better Community (ABC). The program promoted physical activity and walking in selected Rochester neighborhoods, and was supported by funding from the New York State Department of Health (DOH). The Center for Community Health supported a regular group walk in the Marketview Heights Neighborhood to support community health for residents. Several other community groups adopted routes throughout the City, and hosted monthly walks for community members. The program also solicited input from residents regarding barriers to walking in the City of Rochester.

Types of Programs: 

Walk! Bike! Brockport!

Walk! Bike! Brockport! is a community group in the greater Brockport, Sweden, and Clarkson communities that seeks to improve the physical environment for walking and biking in these communities. They also seek to inform community members about the positive physical and mental health benefits of walking and biking and encourage increased active transportation activity. The group hosts weekly bike rides and provides bike rentals free of charge at the Brockport Visitor Center. The group also hosts walking events and supports trail-building initiatives in the community. Walk! Bike! Brockport! also engages in fundraising activities to support capital improvement projects such as benches, trails, and Safe Routes to School infrastructure.

Types of Programs:  



Regional Initiatives

GoBIKE Buffalo

Founded in 2010, GoBIKE Buffalo is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, and their mission is to promote active mobility options, trails and greenways, and complete streets in Western New York. They use advocacy, education, planning, and engagement to empower communities and promote wellness. They provide a variety of planning resources, educational opportunities, and a myriad of other resources and services to achieve their mission.

One of their programs is the Healthy Streets Initiatives, which are Complete Streets interventions that vary in scale from crossing treatments at a single location or intersection to full corridor redesign. Projects may be temporary or semi-permanent installations. They also undertake feasibility studies for trails, road diets, and other design interventions across Erie County and Western New York.

They provide a wide variety of services, including consulting for bike parking, policy review, and site development proposals. They also provide services for purchasing and installation of bike parking.

GoBIKE Buffalo hosts an array of educational programming, including custom classes and workshops, League of American Bicyclists trainings, safety education, and policy education. For example, their Recycle-A-Bicycle (RAB) education program teaches children how to disassemble and reassemble a bicycle, teaching them bicycle mechanical skills, and providing them with safety education and their own custom-built bicycle at the end of the course.

GoBIKE Buffalo also runs the program GO Buffalo Niagara, a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program that provides free resources, tools, and rewards to encourage commuters in Erie and Niagara Counties to switch to alternative modes of transportation. Some of the services and programs include a Guaranteed Ride Home Program, which provides rideshare or transit service if a member needs to leave work unexpectedly. There is also a rewards program for logging non-car trips, a bike share membership, carpool matching program, outreach materials and trainings, and more.

GoBIKE Buffalo has a community workshop where volunteers and members learn to repair and maintain their bicycles. They also have complete refurbished bicycles for sale, along with a stock of used parts and bikes. They also have a series of online educational videos, and host several maps and other resources for active transportation users.

GoBIKE Buffalo partners with several local businesses, including health care providers, banks, local groceries stores, and more. The majority of their funding comes from grants through New York State, the Ralph C. Wilson Foundation, and other local foundations.

Types of Programs:



Takeaways for Monroe County:

There are very few, if any TDM programs available currently in Monroe County. Monroe County could work with local partners, such as Reconnect Rochester, to glean best practices from the GO Buffalo Niagara TDM Program, such as the Guaranteed Ride Home Program. Additionally, GoBIKE's community workshop could be replicated through partnership with R Community Bikes and expansion of their existing bike maintenance and repair services to include educational workshops. GoBIKE Buffalo's 2018 – 2022 strategic plan included a goal of broadening their Western New York reach – which may present opportunities for partnerships between GoBIKE Buffalo and local groups and municipalities.



Bike Walk Tompkins

Bike Walk Tompkins (BWT) is a subsidiary of Center for Community Transportation (CCT), a nonprofit whose vision is to achieve a community where travel by shared and active transportation is healthy, safe, affordable, and convenient for all. CCT operates in Tompkins County, NY, and provides several services and activities that support their vision. BWT promotes safe and convenient active transportation in the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County.

The organization advocates for biking and walking safety, and encourages community members to take action to support local and state initiatives that support walking and biking in Tompkins County. They also authored *Bicycling for Everyone*, an action plan that contains recommendations for reducing barriers to biking. The action plan uses the “five E’s” framework establish a vision, goals, and key actions under the following categories:

- Engineering
- Education
- Encouragement
- Equity & Access
- Evaluation & planning

BWT provides mentoring services by trained community members who volunteer for skills classes, provide 1-on-1 support, and assist in organizing events with BWT. They also undertake data analysis efforts to support walking and biking, including the Ithaca Bike Survey, and analysis of bike share data.

The organization hosts several events throughout the year, the most significant being the Streets Alive! Festival, which is held twice a year in the City of Ithaca. During this event, certain streets are closed to vehicular traffic, and attendees are encourage to walk, bike, roll, and occupy the streets. Activities are hosted along the street corridors such as chalk art, bike rodeos, live music, and bike repair stations.

BWT offers a variety of educational programming, including bike skill classes, mechanic workshops, and safety training. Their website also hosts a variety of informational materials, including maps, local bike shops and community bike groups, and newsletters.

Types of Programs:



Takeaways for Monroe County:

Monroe County could benefit from community liaisons such as the Bike Walk Tompkins mentor program that could help with data collection, outreach at local community events, and training workshops. Additionally, events similar to Streets Alive! happen on a national level, and Monroe County could develop a similar event to promote walking, biking and rolling for its community members in a festive way.



Local Motion

Local Motion is Vermont’s statewide advocacy group for active transportation. Their mission to make it “safe, accessible, and fun for everyone to bike, walk, and roll in Vermont.” Their work ranges from on-the-ground advocacy and community organizing and project-specific technical assistance to workshops and classes for all ages and bike-friendly resources for businesses and communities. Local motion has a variety of bikes that are available to rent between May and October in Burlington, VT. They also provide a ferry for cyclists to access the Champlain Islands. Their website contains a variety of educational information and resources for biking in Vermont. For instance, Local Motion hosts educational webinars regarding a variety of topics such as e-bikes, walkability, health benefits, walking and biking for the elderly population, and more. They also have created several instructional video series such as Everyday Biking Basics 101.

Local Motion hosts a variety of creative programming, including Bike Valet services, an E-Bike Lending Library, technical assistance for Complete Streets designs, and a variety of free workshops for biking. They are the Vermont Safe Routes to School coordinator, and host many youth education programs such as the Bike Smart/Walk Smart program, which provides a 20’ trailer containing bikes, helmets, and training materials to schools and organizations for 1-2 weeks.

Local Motion has strong partnerships with the State Department of Transportation (VTTrans), and local planning organizations to help accomplish their mission.

Types of Programs: 

Takeaways for Monroe County:

Given the rising popularity of e-bikes in Monroe County, an e-bike lending library would allow for local community members to test out various models of e-bikes, and learn more about the regulations and safety operations of using one. Additionally, youth-based education programs such as the Bike Smart/Walk Smart program could be a useful addition to the existing education opportunities in Monroe County.