

LIB Submits Bike Plan Recommendations

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By Ed Barsotti, Executive Director

In late August, LIB sent IDOT and its bike plan consultants a detailed list of policy suggestions for the plan. See www.bikelib.org for the full list, which is summarized here:

Road project selection – Amend IDOT’s prioritization criteria for which state road projects are needed and funded, to factor in current bicyclist/pedestrian conditions and needs.

Adjust bikeway selection table – When certain criteria are met, major IDOT road projects are scoped to accommodate bicycles. The on-road or off-road bikeway type depends on traffic speed, volume and whether there are curbs (urban) or not (rural). LIB suggests edits to the table, to better ensure implementation and match national guidelines:

- For 45+ mph high-traffic rural roads, off-road sidepaths are often unlikely to be implemented. Paved shoulders should be added instead, with sidepaths as an *option*.
- For low-speed high-traffic urban roads, bike lanes should be the primary choice, with sidepaths optional – not vice versa.
- Where the selection table calls for an on-road bike accommodation (usually bike lanes), also indicate for a continuous sidewalk to be included, for younger children and pedestrians.
- For times when the table’s recommended bikeway cannot be implemented, give more guidance on secondary, fallback options. It is not adequate simply to leave a level grassy area for a future off-road sidewalk or sidepath – which may not happen.

Equalize cost shares – Even in IDOT road projects where criteria are met, the local agencies can veto an on-road or off-road bikeway by not paying the 20% share. Requiring a local contribution for a component of a state road project is not a requirement for all states, especially those states with higher-Bicycle-Friendly States rankings. Also, local non-payment is not a valid exception to Illinois’ Complete Streets law. Bicycle and pedestrian project components should have the same cost share as the road itself.

More paved shoulders – Broaden the existing criteria for where paved shoulders are added, with higher priority given to roads connecting at least moderate-sized towns and having no decent alternative roads.

Rumble strip design – Where shoulder rumble strips must be added to shoulders of four to six feet on IDOT roads, use the less impactful federally-recommended narrow strip design with at least three feet of rumble-free “clear zone” and regular longitudinal gaps. With reasonable exceptions, also use this design for IDOT-funded local agency projects adding shoulders and rumble strips.

Shoulder sweeping – Sweep paved shoulders on IDOT roads at least once a year, with prioritization criteria that include locations lacking good alternatives.

IDOT resurfacing projects – Simple resurfacing projects that do not widen the overall paved width can still be opportunities. Where there is excess lane width, reconfigure lane striping for bike lanes (in towns) or paved shoulders (outside of towns). In addition, where there is significant need for bicycle accommodations, consider expanding a resurfacing project's scope, budget, and paved width.

Transportation Alternatives Program – Dedicate at least 80% of this federal funding for bike-related projects, and adopt other suggestions to improve Illinois' spending efficiency.

National standards and guidance – Routinely, and more promptly, incorporate updates of national standards into the design manuals for IDOT roads and IDOT's approval of local road projects.

Other recommendations

- Adopt intersection designs for better off-road bike/ped safety, e.g., right corner islands at large suburban intersections.
- More specifically list bicyclist/motorist education programs for which IDOT would dedicate federal funds.
- Strategically place where the required bicycle/pedestrian coordinator position is within the department, and limit tasks to those appropriate for implementing the plan.
- Provide technical training for project and design staff and consultants.
- Make minor changes to IDOT's nine district bicycle maps.
- Adopt performance measures for overall bike safety and for evaluation of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in road designs.

Further descriptions of our "asks" is in our bike plan letter to IDOT, found at www.bikelib.org.