

The Midway: a Population-Level Bicycle Intervention in Cleveland, Ohio

by: Barbara Clint

SUMMARY

Built atop existing city streets, the completed Midway will function as a “bicycle expressway” with controlled on and off access points. Physically-buffered bike facilities are an innovative form of bike infrastructure which offer continuous physical protection between cyclists and passing motor vehicles within existing street rights of way. Biking is a zero-emission mode of travel that improves air quality, alleviates traffic congestion and increases physical activity, all important health outcomes.



CHALLENGE

As a classic rust belt city, Cleveland, Ohio has seen extensive decline in both its residential population as well as its manufacturing and business base. Once a city of nearly one million, Cleveland’s population now stands at just below 400,000 but supports infrastructure, including streets and bridges, built for a city of more than twice its current size. One result of such excess street capacity is vehicular speeding along neighborhood corridors, creating

unsafe conditions for both bicyclists and pedestrians. Improving travel safety generally is always important, but improving safety of bicycling and walking is especially important because these road users are most vulnerable to fatality and severe injury in a crash. Furthermore, perceived safety of these modes has a direct effect on how many people are willing to choose biking and walking.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

The Midway is a bold, transformative vision for the city of Cleveland which will take an “all hands on deck” approach to complete. Harness the power of your social media. Tweet #IwanttheMidway! Share project updates on Facebook and Instagram. Talk the project up among your family and friends and respect those who don’t yet see why a project of this scope is important. Finally, contribute to Bike Cleveland (www.BikeCleveland.org), the local bike advocacy organization promoting this project.

“Bike facilities like The Midway improve safety for all users, help local businesses, increase motorist and bicyclist lawfulness and get people riding. With the Midway, cyclists of all ages and skill levels, 8 to 80, will love to ride in Cleveland.”

- Jacob VanSickle

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SOLUTION

Cleveland's Midway Protected Bike Boulevard network will be a truly world-class cycling network designed for Clevelanders of all ages and bike skill levels. Consisting of 60 miles of landscape-buffered, two-directional center lane bike lanes—with separate bike signal system—The Midway will connect Cleveland neighborhoods to each other and to key regional assets. The Midway was studied by the Cleveland City Planning Commission in 2016, examining the technical feasibility, programming and strategic implementation of dedicated cycle tracks and protected bike facilities within the City of Cleveland. This plan moves the Midway from a grassroots vision to an official plan of the City of Cleveland.

RESULTS

Cleveland boasts wide street corridors with low traffic volumes, a legacy of our city's former streetcar era and decades of suburban sprawl. The completed Midway plan has identified 52 corridors where 16' to 20' wide center median, landscape-buffered bike facilities can be built, enabling Cleveland residents to embrace active transportation within a safe and inviting riding environment. The first segment of the Midway network, referred to as the "proof of concept corridor," will run along 2.4 miles of Superior Avenue, from Public Square to East 55th Street. An \$ 8.3 million Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation will not only ensure that this segment is built in 2019 but also help project sponsors educate other funders about the multiple benefits of protected bike facilities.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The Midway offers the potential to return the vibrancy of Cleveland's former street car era to city neighborhoods once again and several key partners are supporting the growth in bicycling through their efforts. The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) not only provides 3-bike, front bumper racks on all of their buses through their Rack-N-Roll program, but also permits bikes on-board all Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) buses and GCRTA trains. Another key partner is UH Bikes, Cleveland's 250-bike, 27 fixed station and 4 virtual station bike share program launched in 2016 underwritten by University Hospitals. As some 30% of Cleveland residents lack access to a car, bicycling is also important from a transportation equity perspective.