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Bike Plan Gets Rolling

by Melissa Garrett

A great turn out at the October 5th Bike Network Planning workshop hosted by the City confirmed what many locals already knew to be true: Lakewood has a large and active bicycling community.

This past summer, Mayor FitzGerald and City Council directed Planning & Development staff to develop a city-wide bicycle plan. In collaboration with stakeholders and residents, the department will produce a citywide plan and implementation strategy to improve bicycling conditions on Lakewood's streets.

Slated for completion in early 2011, the bicycle plan will recommend the phased implementation of a continuous network of cross-town routes and facilities. The goal is enhance the overall transportation network and help promote safe and convenient bicycle travel for riders of all abilities. Those same residents who are out and about riding their bikes for recreation and transportation are already playing an important role in planning this network through their participation earlier this month.

Cities of various sizes in all sorts of climates across the nation like Seattle, Denver, Chicago and Pittsburgh have recognized bicycling as an important quality of life and transpor-

tation investment. These cities have made improvements to help bicyclists more equitably get around town. Well thoughtfully planned and designed, additions like public bike parking, dedicated bike lanes, pavement markings like "sharrows" and good bike route signage, have proven and immediate community benefits.

Ohio needs to improve its approach to transportation, ranking 42nd in the nation on the League of American Bicyclists' list of Bike Friendly States. Though there are signs of improvement: the cities of Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati have more recently adopted bike master plans and have begun to construct the recommended improvements.

Lakewood already has a number of bicycle assets that give it a bike-friendly edge. The mostly flat city was developed around streetcar lines, creating a compact layout that offers relatively short distances between schools, parks, residential areas and commercial centers. Most routine trips inside the city are less than five miles – a distance easily capture on bike.

Still, Lakewood is like a lot of Ohio in that we lack the coordinated infrastructure that supports bicycling to take full advantage of these assets. The bike planning effort will collect resident input and ideas, and incorporate

them into a comprehensive plan that addresses five focus areas presented at the October workshop as the 5 E's (Engineering, Education, Enforcement, Encouragement and Evaluation). These categories will shape a plan that not only recommends physical improvements, influence city policies, identify possible funding opportunities and help increase overall public awareness of the rules and responsibilities for drivers and riders alike.

The City posted an on-line map that

summarizes the community comments from the workshop and an on-line survey where anyone unable to attend the meeting can submit information that will help the City better understand the needs of bicycling residents.

The second workshop will be held in mid-November. To view the map and survey visit the City's website at www.onelakewood.com and for more information contact Planning and Development at 216.529.6630 or via e-mail at planning@lakewoodoh.net.

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Lakewood bikers and residents sit down to plan for Lakewood's biking future. Story on Page 4