

What Can We Do Now to Encourage Bike and Walk Commuting?

Prioritizing the 2012 City of La Crosse Bike / Ped Master Plan in 2018

A recommendation from
Carolyn Dvorak, Share and Be Aware Coordinator,
Wisconsin Bicycle Federation,
and James Longhurst, University of Wisconsin - La Crosse

(Version 2.1, April, 2018; accompanying [slideshow](#))

Executive summary: The City of La Crosse has a long list of unfinished bicycle and pedestrian improvement projects, designed by professional consultants over the last five years, that can be implemented *immediately* to support active commuting. We recommend that the city **prioritize inexpensive projects that place directional and informational signs on north/south bicycle and pedestrian corridors**, even if the politically-contentious projects that change the layout of intersections **cannot** be completed at the same time.

Background: In 2012, the City of La Crosse commissioned a [strategic plan](#) to improve the safety, accessibility, and desirability of biking and walking. This plan was created by consulting firm TY Lin International, and approved by Common Council. The Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) was created to oversee implementation of the plan, which includes a list of infrastructure projects meant to be completed *immediately*, in the *near term*, and in the *long term*. At a BPAC meeting in December 2016, BPAC chair and City Traffic Engineer Matt Gallager asked committee members to prioritize the uncompleted projects from that list, intending to quickly complete those projects that are unlikely to face significant political opposition. The intention is to emphasize those parts of the 2012 Bike / Ped Master plan that can serve “Option H,” or the part of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation’s Coulee Region Transportation Study (CRTS) that charges local governments to find ways to reduce traffic congestion in peak-hour commuting by offering non-automobile options for employees, shoppers and school-age children. In particular, facilities in the 2012 Bike/Ped Master Plan that work to relieve north/south peak-hour travel demands should get immediate attention under Option H.

Priority 1A: Immediately fund and install proposed **directional signage** planned by the La Crosse Area Planning Committee in 2016 to link Onalaska to downtown La Crosse via bike/ped bridge, trail, Avon St. Bike Boulevard, North Shore Trail, and Marsh Trails.

In 2016, the [La Crosse Area Planning Committee](#)'s [Committee on Transit and Active Transportation](#) (CTAT) developed plans for a pilot project that would mark the preferred route from the Onalaska Public Library across the new bike/ped bridge, down the Avon Street Bike Boulevard, and to Riverside Park. This is a north/south commuting corridor linking current and future bicycle facilities into a continuous route that would serve to encourage daily commuting to and from Onalaska, the northside, and downtown La Crosse.

“Directional signage” designates a preferred corridor for bicycle and pedestrian travel, guides travelers along the preferred route, and tells them how far it is to desirable destinations along this path (e.g., “Downtown,” “Riverside Park,” “Library,” “Gundersen Medical Center.”) This encourages bicycle and pedestrian travel to useful destinations, marks preferred routes, and reminds drivers that this is a shared-use street. The mileage can serve to encourage new bike and walk commuters by informing them how close useful destinations actually are.

Image from the LAPC proposal:

COST OF PROPOSAL

At \$110 per sign, including post and installation, and 41 signs the total cost of the project would be \$4,510. The City of La Crosse would be responsible for its 30 signs (\$3,300) and the City of Onalaska would be responsible for its 11 signs (\$1,210).

FUNDING

Because of the low cost to do this project, the City of La Crosse and the City of Onalaska could fund their respective portions of the project through their capital improvement programs.



Figure 3: Example bicycle guide sign,

For more examples of directional signage location and design, see NACTO and MUTCD signage below, as well as plans for 17th and King from TY Lin from April 2016.

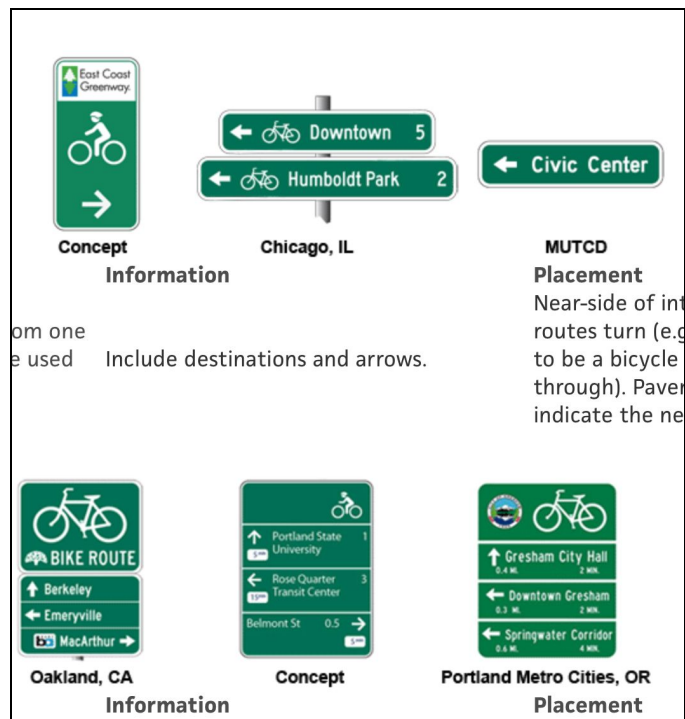
A resolution approving funding for this pilot project has already been approved by Onalaska Common Council. A [resolution approving funding](#) for this pilot project was introduced in June of 2016, **but not yet passed**, by the La Crosse Common Council under the name: Regional Multiuse Trail Proposal.

Priority 1B: Install recommended **directional signage** for all five planned bike boulevard routes (Avon, 17th, King, Farnam, 22nd), even if the politically difficult and more-expensive changes to major intersections cannot yet happen.

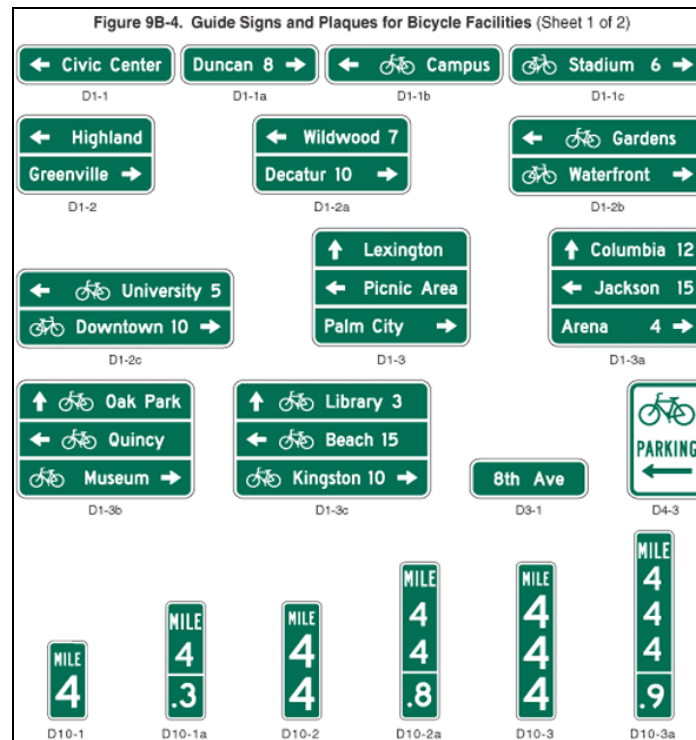
Discussion: These projects are listed in the [2012 Bike Ped master plan](#) as BC124, BC074, BC026, BC053, BC089, BC128, BX160, and 17th street, (which does not have a BC number). While they are listed with an estimated cost, that estimate includes *all* parts of the bike boulevard design, including intersection improvement, curb extensions and more; here, we are recommending that the directional signage be installed before these other features, at considerably lower cost.

To be clear, we're *not* recommending building out the physical components of the Avon, Farnam, and 22nd Street bike boulevards – the biocells, sharrows, intersection improvements -- *just* the directional signage. So the capital costs and political impact are not as great as would be seen with a complete bike boulevard. But these bike boulevards are intended to be routes for bike travel N/S and E/W; to not take action on them because we don't have political will to tackle the intersections yet goes against the intent of the bike boulevards – we should still funnel bike traffic onto these routes because they are quiet residential streets that directly connect areas of the city, and can serve the goals of Option H. By installing signs, we will prioritize walking and biking on these routes now, while working toward full implementation of bike boulevard designs in the years to come.

Examples from [NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide](#):



MUTCD Section 9B.20 Bicycle Guide Signs:



Priority 1C: Immediately complete *all* parts of the 17th and King Bike Boulevard / Neighborhood Greenway plan from TY Lin memo, dated April 2016, **except** King and West intersection [BX24].

Discussion: Unlike the proposed Avon, Farnam, and 22nd street bike boulevards, the City of La Crosse has commissioned and received a design memo specifying the design of the King Street and 17th Street Bike Boulevards. This memo locates biocells, curb extensions, pedestrian crossings, “yield to pedestrian” signs, directional signage, mini traffic circles, median refuges, and re-direction of some stop signs.

We recommend that the City immediately complete all parts of this memo, even *without* the preferred “Alternative C” reconstruction of the King and West intersection. All other components of this design memo can be put into place immediately, at a relatively low cost. (Also, see Priority 3, below)

Priority 2: Install “Directional Signage” for all routes that are *not already* signed as bike boulevards.

Highly Recommended, Marked as “Immediate Term” in 2012 plan: BC019, BC020, BC021, BC022, BC023, BC028, BC035, BC036, BC037, BC038, BC040.

Recommended, Marked as “Near Term” in 2012 plan: BC016, BC057, BC058, BC059, BC060, BC062, BC069, BC077, BC078, BC079, BC092, BC093, BC095, BC100, BC103, BC105, BC106, BC107, BC113, BC126, BC141, BC146, BC152, BC153, BC154, BC155.

Discussion: The 2012 Bike/Ped Master Plan also has an extensive list of routes that are *not* designated as the most-preferred “Bicycle Boulevards,” but that could still be improved with wayfinding or directional signage. We recommend installing all directional signage as an important, inexpensive, low-maintenance step in creating an interconnected network of bicycle-friendly routes throughout the city. This is a significant improvement over the decades-old “Bike Route” signage, which does not clearly indicate destinations, distances, or turns. The improved wayfinding signage can encourage people who have not previously considered the possibility of biking or walking to close destinations.

Priority 3: Complete important intersection improvements that support commuting, taking into account cost, desirability, impact, and feasibility.

Our prioritized list of selected intersection improvement follows:

Highly Recommended because of impact on North/South commuting corridors:

1. [BX42] Bike roundabout, 3 Rivers trail
2. [BX26] install signal on Monitor and Avon (high political impact, but serves north/south)
3. [BX28] install signal, Clinton and Avon (high political impact, but serves north/south)
4. [BX29] RRFB, Gillette and Avon
5. [PX14] signalize the Jackson/19th Malfunction Junction
6. [PX22 / PX23] RRFB [or other pedestrian safety improvement] at Green Bay and 21st (might be completed out of Holy Trinity-Longfellow neighborhood association capital improvement funds?)
7. [BX03] La Crosse and East (Bikes May Use Full Lane sign, dashed lines]
8. [BX15] add medians on South, pedestrian refuge islands, South and 15th
9. [BX41] RRFB [or other pedestrian safety improvement] at Campbell and 22nd, Myrick Park (might be completed out of Grandview Emerson Neighborhood Association capital improvement funds?)

Recommended because of high impact on bicycle and pedestrian commuting on bike boulevard network, but with possibility of political challenges, high cost, or conflict:

1. [BX24] King and West intersection (see Alternative “C” in 2016 TY Lin design memo)
2. [BX16] install signal, restrict turns, State Road and 22nd/23rd
3. [BX38] signal at Main and 22nd to facilitate Bike Boulevard

Recommended, but with low impact on north/south travel:

1. [PX04] Logan and Rose, Hi Viz crosswalk
2. [BX25] La Crosse and Losey eliminate channelized slip lane, fix pedestrian crosswalks
3. [PX 24] RRFB County B school entrance

Not recommended out of bicycle or pedestrian funds because of considerable **expense, and high political impact:**

[BX39, BX40, PX05] Reconfigure La Crosse, Copeland, 4th

Priority 4: Bike Lanes

1. [BC031] [Contraflow Bike Lane](#) on East Ave: serves North/South, and extends newly-completed East Ave Bike Lanes
2. [BC018] Bike Lane, Main Street 2nd to 7th
3. [BC043] Bike Lane, Green Bay at East to Losey

Discussion: There are fairly few additional bike lanes in the Bike/Ped Master Plan that serve north/south corridor or commuter travel, but these few linkages are important enough to take immediate action on. This is a prioritized list.

Priority 5A: Refresh and maintain existing Shared Lane markings

Discussion: because of their relatively low impact on behavior, and because of the difficulty in finding maintenance funds to repaint them, we place shared lane (“Sharrow”) markings fairly low on our list of priorities. The first priority -- before adding new shared lane markings -- should be to refresh and maintain existing shared lane markings on 16th, Main, 7th, and other locations. We suggest paint be replaced with longer-lasting thermoplastic. For more information, see the 2015 report [Faded Sharrows](#).

Priority 5B: Add new Shared Lane and Shared Lane / Parking Lane markings

Discussion: There are a few locations where new shared lane markings, possibly paired with painted parking lanes and “Bikes May use Full Lane” Signage, can serve to connect other, better bicycle facilities (like bike boulevards, lanes, or routes). In all of these locations, we recommend installing thermoplastic shared lane markings over paint, for improved durability. We are prioritizing difficult connections and north-south roads before east-west roads and other connections.

1. [BC072] Shared Lane, 21st PI - Ward -Weston
2. [BC071] Shared Lane, 21st PL- Mormon Coulee/Victory- Ward
3. [BC065] Shared Lane, Shelby- East to Mormon Coulee
4. [BC070] Shared Lane, Victory- East to Mormon Coulee/21st
5. [BC147] Shared Lane, 5th Street- Farnam to Main
6. [BC112] Shared Lane, 13th Street- Main to Pine
7. [BC042] Shared Lane / Parking Lane, Green Bay - South to East
8. [BC091] Shared Lane, 22nd Street- Green Bay to Denton
9. [BC048] Shared Lane, 7th - Sims to Cass
10. [BC049] Shared Lane/Parking Lane, 7th- River Trail to Sims

11. [BC050] Shared Lane, Cook- River Trail to 7th
12. [BC051] Shared Lane, 13th/Barlow - West to Weston
13. [BC061] Shared Lane/Parking Lane, 13th- Green Bay to Market
14. [BC063] Shared Lane, 15th- Thompson to Weston
15. [BC148] Shared Lane, 22nd Street- Denton to State
16. [BC090] Shared Lane, Denton Street- 22nd to 23rd
17. [BC032] Shared Lane, East - Ward to Green Bay
18. [BC110] Shared Lane, 13th Street- Market to Cass
19. [BC111] Shared Lane, 14th Street- Cass to Main
20. [BC073] Shared Lane/ Parking Lane 14th St, Weston- Green Bay
21. [BC150] Shared Lane, Farnam St, South to 7th
22. [BC045] Shared Lane/Parking Lane, Weston - 13th to 21st
23. [BC068] Shared Lane, 33rd St- 33rd St Trailhead to 33rd St Trailhead????
24. [BC066] Shared Lane, Broadview- Mormon Coulee to 33rd St Trail
25. [BC067] Shared Lane, Broadview- 33rd St Trail to 33rd
26. [BC156] Shared Lane, Vine Street- 4th-7th
27. [BC027] Shared Lane, Cass Street, 22nd to 29th
28. [BC075] Shared Lane, Cass, 3rd to 22nd
29. [BC130] Shared Lane, Loomis Street- Gillette to Salem
30. [BC129] Shared Lane, Moore Street- Rose to George
31. [BC046] Shared Lane/Parking Lane, Ward- Losey to Pammel Creek

Glossary:

BC / BX / PC / PX: BC is TY Lin's designation for "bike corridor," BX is for "bike intersection", PC is "pedestrian corridor," PX "pedestrian intersection."

A "**Bike Boulevard**" or "neighborhood greenway" is a low-stress, shared roadway bicycle facility, generally built on quiet residential streets (low-volume, low-speed automobile traffic) that directly connect cyclists and pedestrians to places that they want to go, designed to offer priority for bicyclists operating within a roadway shared with motor vehicle traffic. More information: <http://ruraldesignguide.com/mixed-traffic/bicycle-boulevard> or <http://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/bicycle-boulevards/> or <http://www.streetfilms.org/in-portland-every-day-is-walk-bike-to-school-day/>

A "**Bike Lane**" is a marked, continuous lane to the right of the motor vehicle travel lane.

A "**Shared Lane**," sometimes marked as a "**sharrow**," is a symbol affixed to the road surface to indicate that a lane is shared between motor vehicles and bicycles. This should be used where the right-of-way is too narrow to accommodate a bike lane, to indicate the correct direction of travel for cyclists, to indicate appropriate lane positioning, and (sometimes) to indicate a turn or wayfinding. A "**Shared Lane / Parking Lane**" is a sharrow used in conjunction with painted marks to designate stalls for vehicle parking to the right of the shared travel lane.