



COMMUNITY REPORT CARD AND FEEDBACK

La Crosse, Wisconsin
October 22, 2013

Introduction

Thank you for submitting an application to the Walk Friendly Communities program on behalf of La Crosse, Wisconsin! A Walk Friendly Community is a city or town that has shown a commitment to improving walkability and pedestrian safety through comprehensive programs, plans and policies.

Each application was evaluated by at least three reviewers to provide a fair assessment of your community and provide technical feedback on how to improve the walkability of your community.

After thorough consideration of your application, we are designating La Crosse as a Bronze Walk Friendly Community. In reviewing your application, there were several areas that we were particularly impressed with, including:

- Excellent engineering practices, especially La Crosse's regular crosswalk maintenance, appropriate traffic calming measures, and geometric design features.
- The Safe Routes to School planning and excellent activities provided for children. Of particular interest were the level of community participation in Walk to School Day and the growth in participation for walking school buses.
- High quality sidewalk standards that demonstrate a commitment on the part of the city to providing safe pedestrian accommodations.
- Bridges often provide crucial access points over major pedestrian barriers, such as highways, rivers, and railroad tracks. It is great to see that all bridges in La Crosse accommodate pedestrians.

La Crosse has exhibited a desire to become a community that supports active transportation. The application to the Walk Friendly Communities program is an endorsement of that desire and it is our hope that the feedback and information we provide, can help your community improve in this regard.

We have noted several areas in which your community can improve its policies, programs, and standards. This report card provides detailed feedback on how your community can take its programs and initiatives to the next level; take the time to review the feedback and contact us with any questions.

Primary Recommendations

This section identifies and provides suggestions for the most vital areas of improving La Crosse's overall walkability. Additional details are provided in the following sections. **We recommend that you read these areas thoroughly and develop clear goals, benchmarks, funding sources, and an implementation schedule for reaching these goals.**

- One way to encourage people to walk is to **organize car-free days, or Ciclovias**, which close the street to automobile traffic and open it to pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized users. This type of event can provide an opportunity to be active in the city, while also allowing for positive interaction with other members of the community and creating momentum around transportation other than motor vehicles.
- Expand your safety **education and outreach** to the general public, focusing on communicating safety messages to particular audiences like children, motorists, and older pedestrians. Targeted education campaigns can enhance the effectiveness of engineering treatments in reducing crashes.
- La Crosse should **develop an ongoing count program** to regularly determine the levels of walking in the city. This process will help you determine where people are walking, where you can focus your improvements, and can help “make the case” for more investment in walking programs and facilities.
- It is important to conduct pre- and post-**evaluations for pedestrian projects**. This will allow for a better understanding of how they have impacted pedestrian safety and walkability. Positive findings can be used to justify more investment in projects that benefit pedestrians.

Feedback by Section

This remainder of this report card will provide detailed feedback and suggestions for each section in the community assessment tool. Feedback will include research to support the importance of this question as well as tools, guides, and case studies of successful implementations in other communities.

Each section received an overall score as defined below:

- **Walk Friendly:** The responses in this section indicate that your community is particularly strong in this area with great efforts being made towards improving walkability. Even so, there are always areas within this section where improvements and growth could be made.
- **On the Right Track:** This score indicates that your community does not exhibit the characteristics to be truly walk friendly in this section, but that there are still good existing programs or new programs that could be expanded. Please review our suggestions on how you could improve the walkability in this area.
- **Needs Attention:** This score indicates that your community does not yet demonstrate strong programs, policies, and results, characteristic of a Walk Friendly Community based on the responses in this section. Please review our suggestions carefully on how you can create positive change in your community with both short- and long-term objectives.

Community Profile

On the Right Track

- We were glad to see that your mayor signed the International Charter for Walking, which demonstrates city leadership's commitment to enhancing walkability and pedestrian safety.
- If bicycle issues tend to dominate the discussion for the advisory board, consider creating mode-specific task forces.
- Overall, 150 hours per year is not a substantial amount of time for a coordinator to spend on pedestrian and bicycle issues, particularly for a city the size of La Crosse. It would be great to see more staff time devoted to pedestrian issues. Check out the report [Why Communities & States Need Bicycle and Pedestrian Staff](#).

Status of Walking

On the Right Track

- La Crosse has a relatively high mode share for walking, but it appears that the percentage of people walking to work might be decreasing.
- It's good to see no pedestrian fatalities for the years between 2007 and 2011, but the injury rate is fairly high. We wondered if there has been a change in the way pedestrian crashes are reported. For example, in 2007 only 1 of 28 crashes resulted in a pedestrian injury; but in 2011, 35 of 38 crashes resulted in an injury.
- Collecting crash data is a first step towards understanding how safe walking is in a community. This data can also help city officials understand if treatments are necessary and, with some crash analysis, where these improvements are needed.

Planning

On the Right Track

- It is good to see that a community the size of La Crosse has put together a pedestrian plan. While the plan provides guidance and prioritizes projects, it could provide a target crash reduction or target mode share goal. By including these types of measures, the advisory board can ensure that the plan is actually implemented. When it's time for an update, the plan should draw on public input, baseline data, and other aspects and should include SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals. For example, Fort Collins, a Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community, has a comprehensive [Pedestrian Plan](#) that sets reachable targets.
- To accompany the Green Complete Streets policy, it may be helpful to create a unified set of design guidelines and strategies to help educate staff and assist in outreach. San Francisco's [Better Streets Plan](#) is a set of implementation strategies and goals to provide and maintain a better streetscape and pedestrian environment. The plan "seeks to balance the needs of all street users, with a particular focus on the pedestrian environment and how streets can be used as public space." The Better Streets Plan carries out the [Better Streets Policy](#) of San Francisco's intent to plan streets for pedestrian-oriented and multi-modal designs.
- La Crosse should ensure that there is strong outreach to minority and low-income groups. Public participation is integral to the success of transportation planning and

should be considered at every stage of the planning process, from collecting baseline data to conducting post-implementation evaluation. Input can be incorporated through public forums, participation in advisory boards, committees, etc. The PBIC's website can provide some helpful [resources](#) on public input.

- Arlington County, Virginia, a Gold-level Walk Friendly Community, began holding "Walking Town Meetings" in an effort to solicit more specific public input, in 2007. Through local civic associations, community members took Arlington Board members and staff on a walking tour of the neighborhood to highlight issues of concern, ideas for improvements, and to showcase the community. Following the meeting, planning staff documented the issues that were presented as information and possible alternatives for consideration by the County Board. La Crosse could institute a program like this that incorporates more active public input.
- It is clear that the sidewalk policies support the creation of a community with pedestrian facilities on both sides of nearly every street. We were impressed with the six foot width requirement.
- A connectivity policy is extremely important in terms of encouraging pedestrian access and pedestrian travel. In addition, street connectivity, grid networks, and short block lengths are helpful in creating direct routes to destinations. More information about connectivity can be found [here](#). The Victoria Transport Policy Institute also provides [guidelines](#) on connectivity policies. Lincoln, Nebraska, an honorable mention Walk Friendly Community, has a connectivity policy for the entire city, which mandates that the City block lengths not exceed 1,320 feet in length, and if they exceed 1,000 feet, pedestrian easements are required. More information can be found [here](#).
- The number of trails cited is impressive, though La Crosse could consider creating further impetus to add trails through incentives and zoning. This would certify that trails continue to be an important component of the walkable network in La Crosse. Flagstaff, a Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community, is home to a popular and extensive trail system called the [Flagstaff Urban Trail System](#). It connects many areas of the city and currently has over 50 miles of trails. Another 80 miles are planned! La Crosse could consider some of the tools on Flagstaff's website to enhance people's understanding of the trails system in the city.
- Transit service in La Crosse is good for a community of its size, especially the service hours.
- La Crosse should comprehensively evaluate its parking programs and should strongly consider maximum parking standards, priced public parking, and parking location requirements. More information can be found [here](#). The example of Arlington County, Virginia, demonstrates a proactive approach to adapting parking standards to support walking and compact city development. Arlington has a goal of developing as a dense, transit-oriented community that required strategic management of parking. The policies the community has implemented showcase a superb understanding of market-based parking management. Parking costs are unbundled from housing and shared parking between uses is encouraged. The community also offers cash-out incentives, providing employees that do not require a parking space with monetary compensation.
- According to research, dense development leads to higher levels of walking and transit use and less driving. Some measures to increase density, such as accessory dwelling units and density bonuses can be very positive for the vitality of a community or city center. This [EPA resource](#) can provide more information about this subject. More information about density bonuses can be found [here](#).

- Neighborhood school siting policies could also be helpful in terms of encouraging young people to walk or bike to school.
- La Crosse could also consider form-based codes a way to ensure that the amenities in the pedestrian environment are supportive of walking and that buildings are designed to accommodate pedestrians. Silver-level Redwood City, California, has a [form-based code](#) and a requirement for mixed use that could be useful as a resource in La Crosse.
- While the urban design features are good in La Crosse, more could be done to improve the comfort of pedestrians along roadways. Charlotte, North Carolina, a Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community, has a [Center City Transportation Plan](#) that provides guidance on the design of urban features and enhancements of the pedestrian environment. The plan includes sections on land use, urban design, vehicular circulation, parking, wayfinding, transit, pedestrian circulation, and bicycle circulation. La Crosse could consider establishing policies or guidelines for the placement of design features.

Education & Encouragement

On the Right Track

- Great Safe Routes to School programs! It's wonderful to see the community support and dedicated staff time.
- While it is good to see that professional staff help train and educate the public, it is also important to have ongoing education for planners, engineers, law enforcement, and health professionals. This type of commitment to professional development underscores the priority a community places upon the importance of walking, walkability, and pedestrian safety. By educating public officials, communities can help ensure that ordinances and policies that support walking are actually implemented. The PBIC offers some [training courses](#) and free [webinars](#). This [case study](#) also highlights how the police can benefit from extra training. Webinars, in particular, are often free and are a great way to educate local city officials with regard to walking and walkability.
- A combination of education and encouragement efforts can have a large effect on pedestrian volumes as well as pedestrian safety in a community. Also, there can be major differences in the walking abilities, behavioral patterns, and learning capacities of different groups of pedestrians and other road users. Because of this, educational programs succeed when tailored to specific audiences and to the behaviors they seek to modify. La Crosse could consider environmental campaigns and walking training or "walk to work" days and should tailor any campaigns to specific populations. The Fall 30 Walking Challenge sounds like an interesting program, but we would have liked to have read more about the target audience and how the program is publicized.
- Arlington County, Virginia, has education and encouragement programs that are incredibly important in fostering community support for walkability. The community runs a number of innovative programs that engage community members:
 - [Street Smart](#) is a public awareness and enforcement campaign in its tenth year that uses print, outdoor, online, and broadcast media channels throughout the metropolitan Washington area to reach a diverse audience.
 - The [Car Free Diet](#) program is an innovative development aimed at raising awareness of the health, environmental, financial, and commuting benefits of going car-free or car-lite through web, video, blogs, social media, transit advertising, a Car-Free Diet Calculator, and media outreach.

- The [Neighborhood 25](#) program is a campaign that began in 2010 as a response to the difference in fatal crashes that occur at 20 mph and 30 mph with “Keep Kids Alive – Drive 25” signs placed throughout the neighborhoods in conjunction with police placement of speed feedback signs.
- To encourage people to walk, La Crosse should create a walking map including all walking facilities and likely pedestrian destinations. This can help people see all the options available to them and create a walking route.
- Fort Collins is working to create a culture of walking in the City through [tours](#) and [wayfinding](#) signs. The Bronze-level Village of Shorewood, Wisconsin, has a printed [map](#) that shows walkable destinations and Bronze-level New Orleans offers an interactive, [online map](#). These are good examples of the range of walking maps that La Crosse could create.
- There are many community groups and businesses that might be interested in helping La Crosse create a wayfinding system. In Gold-level Washington D.C., the Downtown Business Improvement District led the effort of 30 stakeholder groups to develop a citywide wayfinding signage system that is now slated to expand to neighborhoods beyond downtown.
- The City of Philadelphia, designated as a Gold-level Walk Friendly Community, has set the bar for pedestrian wayfinding programs learn more about their program [here](#).
- Consider a Car Free Event, or Ciclovia, during which a selected route will be closed to vehicle traffic and opened up for jogging, walking, and cycling. The event focuses community attention on alternative modes, and can provide numerous other benefits. More information available at this [link](#) or the [Open Streets Project website](#). Case studies from [Chicago](#) and [Clearwater, Florida](#), can also provide more guidance.
- Shortly after receiving its Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community designation, [Wilsonville, Oregon](#), launched its first-ever open streets event.

Engineering

Walk Friendly

- The sidewalk design standards and coverage are outstanding and representative of a truly walkable environment!
- It is good to see that La Crosse’s sidewalk prioritization criteria are clearly stated in the city’s municipal code. If the city conducts an annual sidewalk inventory and has 500 to 800 linear feet of sidewalk slated for repair next year, the city should be able to estimate the percentage of sidewalk that needs repair. This is an important aspect of any sidewalk inventory.
- Corvallis, Oregon, a Gold-level Walk Friendly Community, has an excellent program to replace and install needed sidewalks called the [Sidewalk Safety Program](#). The goal of the program is to repair and replace hazardous sidewalks and to complete unfinished sections of the sidewalk system over time. Each year, one of eleven sidewalk districts is surveyed for sidewalks in need of repairs. The repair criteria are specific, to ensure consistent application in every situation. Corvallis’s Sidewalk Maintenance Fee provides an annual source of funding to do this work, and the city will repair defects each year up to the amount of funding available. La Crosse could consider some of these strategies.

- Good job including pedestrian provisions on your bridges. These facilities can often represent barriers to pedestrian travel, but you have ensured that they do not impede walking trips.
- Pedestrian [signalization](#) is an important component of a walkable environment. Requiring new road or sidewalk construction and any sidewalk maintenance to include pedestrian signals (audible and vibrotactile warnings as well) will be particularly important for creating a pedestrian-friendly street network and encouraging people to walk. The [Accessible Pedestrian Signals](#) guide and the [PEDSAFE guidelines](#) are helpful resources.
- Great average walk speed in La Crosse, but the city should consider prioritizing the installation of countdown signals since only 3% of intersections currently have them.
- Right-turn-on-red restrictions (by time-of-day or full-time) should be considered in the downtown area to reduce intersection conflicts with pedestrians. Another simple, useful change at signalized intersections is the leading pedestrian interval (LPI). The LPI gives pedestrians an advance walk signal before the motorists get a green light, giving the pedestrian several seconds to start in the crosswalk where there is a concurrent signal. Pedestrians are more visible to motorists and motorists are more likely to yield to them.
- Great crosswalk policies, especially the annual repainting of all crosswalks. It's good to see that La Crosse currently has six RRFBs. Since this is a relatively new technology for some communities, we are curious to hear more about your city's administrative policies regarding RRFBs.

Enforcement

On the Right Track

- For a community of its size, it is great to see that La Crosse has six officers who are bike patrol certified and that dedicated time is spent to enforcing pedestrian laws.
- La Crosse should ensure that targeted speed enforcement takes place in the city regardless of grant allocations, which may fluctuate.
- Decoy crosswalk enforcement operations are particularly effective methods at improving safety and driver yielding. These operations should be conducted and paired with media messaging.
- It is great to see that police cite drivers for failing to yield to pedestrians. Also, keeping parked cars away from crosswalks and off of sidewalks is critical, so it's good to see you're doing that as well. If allowed by law, consider using photo enforcement to reduce red-light violations, which can often also improve pedestrian safety. See Chapter 8 of the [Countermeasures That Work](#) for more information.
- City police, traffic engineers, and planners should establish a quarterly meeting to discuss pedestrian safety and review any crashes involving pedestrians or bicyclists. This can have a profound effect on safety by approaching the issue from different standpoints and using different tools.
- Gainesville, Florida, a Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community, provides a great example of using interagency coordination to improve pedestrian safety. The Gainesville Police Department speaks or meets once a week with city traffic engineers, which helps both agencies identify problem areas and potential solutions. Traffic crash calls in the city have been lowered by 32 percent in the last five years. The Police Department also meets once a month with state traffic engineers.

Evaluation Needs Attention

- La Crosse should implement a count program, which could have substantial benefits in terms of funding for pedestrian improvements. A count program can help "make the case" for more/enhanced walking amenities and can help prioritize improvements. Consider participating in the [National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project](#), or use their [count forms](#) and methodology to begin your own counts.
- While Walkability Checklists are a really helpful tool, there are also other tools that can enhance the understanding of the built environment from the perspective of pedestrians. [Pedestrian Intersection Safety Indices](#) and [Health Impact Assessments](#) are important new tools and can provide helpful guidance.
- Conducting pre- and post-evaluations for developments and other projects in La Crosse is the only way to know how your efforts have improved pedestrian safety. La Crosse should begin pre- and post-evaluations for every pedestrian project in order to develop a better understanding of how it has impacted pedestrian safety and walkability—you can use positive findings to justify more investment in pedestrian projects.

More Information

If you have questions or comments regarding this feedback, your community's initiatives and programs, or the application process in general, we'd like to hear from you. Please contact:

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You can also send general inquiries to info@walkfriendly.org