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Seattle getting better for bikes, still needs work, club says

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Seattle gets a B grade for bicycling, but has particular problems with pavement quality, safety perceptions and the number of women riders, according to a new [report](#) from the [Cascade Bicycle Club](#).

"After only two years with an adopted Bicycle Master Plan, the city's service toward bicycling has been commendable," the club said in its 2009 Report Card on Bicycling. "Seattle has nearly doubled the miles of bicycle routes since 2006, added several hundred bicycle racks, decreased the number of bicycle thefts, and maintained a consistent, if not decreasing, bicycle crash rate."

Since 2007, the city has made integrating cycling facilities routine and started finding "innovative and expressive" ways to support cycling, the report said. "In other words, cycling is becoming an icon to Seattle."

Seattle has gone from fewer than 70 miles of bike routes in 2006 to more than 130 miles now, with a bike master plan goal of 450 miles by 2017, the report noted.

The U.S. Census Bureau reported that bicycling trips grew 27 percent in Seattle between 2000 and 2005, making it the city's fastest-growing form of transportation. City downtown bike counts showed an increase from 1,104 bicyclists over two and a half hours in a 1992 tally to 2,273 in 2007. A 2008 count at 32 neighborhood locations reported 4,686 cyclists.

"The City estimated that between 4,000 and 8,000 people currently commute by bicycle every day, though we believe it to be closer to 15,000," the club said, basing that number on Puget Sound Regional Council survey data showing 4.2 percent of city residents commuting to work by bike in 2006.

Here are the biggest problems the report cited.

Satisfaction with pavement quality, D plus:

"We regularly hear from cyclists that poor pavement quality and lack of street maintenance is the number one issue with bicycling in their community. While having bike lanes in the City is ideal, if the bike lanes are filled with debris or the pavement is riddled with potholes and cracks, cycling becomes unsafe and undesirable."

Bicycle safety, B; satisfaction with bicycle safety, C:

"While the number of reported bicycle crashes in Seattle is relatively low, cyclists' perceptions of bicycle safety is not as high as we would like it to be," the report said. It said addressing disconnected bike routes, insufficient lanes, poor pavement quality, and driver behavior could help.

Gender distribution, C:

The city's 2007 downtown bicycle counts and 2008 neighborhood counts found just 21 percent and 29 percent, respectively, of cyclists were women.

"While this is not unique to Seattle, there is obviously a need to encourage female cyclists," the report said. "A survey conducted by San Francisco Bicycle Coalition found that the number one reason women don't bike is because they feel unsafe riding in close proximity to cars. In (the Cascade Bicycle Club's) Report Card survey, women indicated that disconnected bike routes and lack of bike lanes were the number one issue with bicycling in Seattle."

Satisfaction with bicycle routes, C:

"The majority of participants indicated a moderate level of satisfaction with Seattle's bicycle facilities. But when we asked what the main issue with bicycling in Seattle was, the highest response was 'disconnected bicycle routes.' When asked what would make the City better for bicycling, 27 percent of respondents identified 'more separate bicycle facilities,' such as paths and trails, followed closely by 'more bicycle lanes.'"

Here are the other grades.

- Bicycle participation, B;
- Bicycle network, C plus;
- Bicycle support facilities, B;
- Bicycle counts, B;
- Level of bicycling, A minus;
- Bicycle Master Plan implementation, B plus;
- New bicycle racks, A;
- Bicycle service on public transit, B;
- Parking and 'end of trip' facilities, C plus;
- Bicycle crash rate, B;
- Reported bicycle thefts, A plus.

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