



The Circle-Heights Bike Network

Connecting great destinations by bicycle in University Circle and the surrounding Heights

A citizens' planning concept from EcoCity Cleveland to promote transportation choices and livable communities



A special project of EcoCity Cleveland

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Disclaimer

This map is a concept from EcoCity Cleveland, not an official plan from a local government or planning agency. EcoCity has published this map to help citizens imagine what a future bicycle-friendly district could be like. Bicycle route locations depicted are illustrative only. Users of this map should be aware that potential hazards and obstructions might exist on the routes shown and that EcoCity and the supporters of this project in no way warrant the safety or fitness of the suggested routes. The user of this map bears the full responsibility for his or her safety. **Bike safely!**



Our process

Over the past year, EcoCity Cleveland has conducted a citizens' planning process to create the concept of the Circle-Heights Bike Network. We started by identifying the major destinations to which people would like to bike – destinations such as retail districts, employment centers, public buildings (libraries, schools, municipal offices), and cultural institutions. Then we attempted to identify the best bike routes between these destinations. We also thought about connecting bike facilities to transit stops, since bikes are allowed on RTA buses and the Rapid.

After sketching out our initial concept, we consulted with city planning officials and several focus groups of avid bicyclists. We also organized two public meetings to gather input.

This illustrated map is the product of our thinking and citizen comments. The map is a concept, not an official plan. Its purpose is to stimulate public discussion about the potential for bicycle transportation in the Circle-Heights district – and inspire people to start riding the suggested routes.

In the coming months, the staff of EcoCity Cleveland will continue to work with city officials, the region's transportation planning agency, and citizens to promote the implementation of the Circle-Heights Bike Network. Much of the network could be created inexpensively by marking existing streets with signs and paint. In some places, more expensive improvements (such as bike lanes, off-road paths, safer catch basin grates, or smoother pavement) will be needed. Transportation funding is available for such projects. The cities in the Circle-Heights district can obtain the funds if they work together on this exciting concept.

We started thinking about bike-friendly areas in the Circle-Heights district because it has one of the highest concentrations of bikable destinations in Northeast Ohio. If the concept succeeds, we hope to inspire other places to do similar conceptual plans. For example, other obvious choices would include Downtown/Ohio City or Lakewood and surrounding communities.

Help create the network!

The creation of a bike network that crosses four communities will require a lot of cooperation and a lot of public support. Here's how you can help:

- Show this map to your local elected officials and city planners in Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights, and University Heights. Tell them the Circle-Heights Bike Network is a great idea!
- If you work in the Circle-Heights district, show this map to your employer and ask him or her to be an advocate for better bike facilities.
- Watch for notices of public meetings where the bike network will be discussed. Meetings will be announced on the EcoCity Cleveland Web site at www.ecocitycleveland.org.
- Start using the bike network. Every bike on the streets is an advertisement for alternative transportation.
- Send us your suggestions for improving the network.

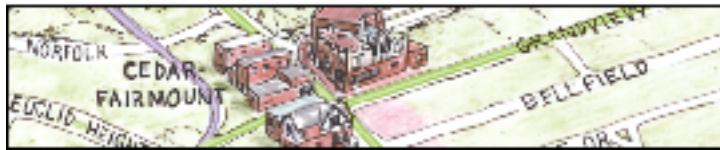
Support organizations, such as EcoCity Cleveland, that are working to create bike-friendly communities.

Kinds of routes

The Circle-Heights Bike Network would have two main kinds of routes – **fast** and **slow**. Some of the slow routes could be “**Bicycle Boulevards**” or off-road **paths**, as explained below:

Fast routes (green on the map) — These streets typically provide the most direct way to a destination with the fewest number of stops required. They also have more motorized traffic moving at higher average speeds. Experienced cyclists often use these routes.

Slow routes (blue on the map) — These routes have less traffic traveling at lower speeds, but they often follow winding residential roads and encounter frequent stop signs. These routes may be preferred by riders who are less time-focused or less comfortable sharing the road with motorists.



Bicycle boulevards — Residential streets where cut-through motor traffic is discouraged by physical design, and a bicycle-friendly environment is created with wayfinding signage, reduced number of stop signs, and high standards of pavement maintenance. These treatments would have the additional community benefit of reducing inappropriate cut-through car traffic and speeding by cars. In the Circle Heights district, Meadowbrook, Cottage Grove and Washington would make ideal bicycle boulevards.

Bike paths — These off-road paths allow cyclists to be separated from cars. On the plus side, they provide a safe refuge for cyclists who don't want to mix with cars. On the negative side, there can be dangerous conflicts between bikes and pedestrians on the trail, and between bikes and surprised motorists at path/street intersections. As a fully-developed area, the Circle-Heights district has limited opportunities for the construction of new bike paths. But paths should be considered where feasible, such as along North Park Boulevard.

An important caveat: the designation of some streets as bike routes does not mean that bikes are not allowed on other streets. Bikes are vehicles, and, except on limited access highways, have the same rights to the road as motor vehicles. Experienced cyclists know how to claim their share of the road. The point of developing a special bike network is to encourage cycling as a popular mode of transportation among a much wider range of people.

Needed improvements

The Circle-Heights Bike Network can be phased in over time. Initially, a lot of simple and inexpensive things can be done with signage and paint markings on streets (such as bike symbols) – signals that create the impression that the district is a place where bikes are an accepted part of the transportation system. In addition, fast routes would require attention to pavement maintenance and drain grates. Slow routes might require fewer stop signs, high pavement quality, traffic calming to discourage speeding motorists, and perhaps wayfinding signs that show distances to destinations.



Missing links

In addition to making the simple improvements mentioned above, it will be important to address a number of critical missing links in the bike network. These missing links could be filled by a combination of striped bike lanes, off-street trails, pavement widening, or intersection improvements. Problem areas include:

The Circle-Heights district lacks safe and convenient **north-south** routes. Cottage Grove Drive could become a residential bike boulevard. Bike lanes should be evaluated for Lee Road, Coventry Road, and South Taylor Road. This is a critical need.

The district has better **east-west** connections, but few are truly bike-friendly routes. Meadowbrook and Washington could become residential bike boulevards. Euclid Heights Boulevard, Cedar Road, and Mayfield Road should all be evaluated for bike lanes.

University Circle needs a complete study of its own, given the large number of destinations and density of campus housing. One potential route starts at the intersection of Cedar Road, Euclid Heights Boulevard, and Overlook Road. It travels east on tiny Carlton Road, then descends the hill along an old carriage path to the intersection of Murray Hill and Adelbert roads. It continues through the CWRU quad, crossing Euclid Avenue at Adelbert and heading north between Thwing Center and the university library, across to Bellflower, along the edge of the Cleveland Institute of Art parking lot, and across to Wade Oval, finally connecting to the Harrison Dillard Bikeway going north to the lakefront.

To cross the **Doan Brook** ravine near Roxboro Road, a pedestrian/bicycle bridge could be built using the piers of an old bridge at the site.

A path connecting Crest Road to **Severance Town Center** should be improved.

Washington Boulevard is interrupted at South Taylor Road by a school. A connection could be re-established for bikes.



Climbing the hill

The defining physical feature of the Circle-Heights district is the **Portage Escarpment**, the hill (i.e., Cedar Hill, Fairhill, Edgehill) that rises from the Lake Plain to the Heights on the Allegheny Plateau. The 100-foot elevation change itself is a challenge for many would-be bike commuters, but all of the routes across the escarpment could be made more bike-friendly. In some cases, this means constructing or improving off-street trail segments, but on other streets it would only require a little paint and pavement maintenance. Recommended improvements for traversing the hill include:

Cedar Hill and its upper and lower intersections — Develop an off-road trail with a clear way through the intersections.

Ambler Park between Martin Luther King Boulevard and Fairhill Road and its intersections — Develop an off-road trail with connections to Ambleside and a clear way through upper and lower intersections.

Edgehill Road — Stripe a bike lane on the uphill side.

Mayfield Road — Stripe a bike lane on the uphill side.

Lakeview Cemetery — The cemetery is currently off limits to bikes, but it would make an ideal bicycling connection if issues of liability and propriety could be resolved.

Bicycling: The healthy alternative

Whether you're going to work or school, to shop, or to visit friends, riding your bicycle is a great transportation choice for getting around your community.

PERSONAL BENEFITS

- Improved health – Inactivity is now recognized by public health professionals as one of the nation's leading health threats. By designing opportunities for physical activity into the community while meeting daily transportation needs, more people can get daily exercise and live healthier lives.

- Affordable transportation options for short-range commuters – Despite the short commute distances involved in the Circle-Heights area, thousands of residents pay to drive and park their cars. In addition, we substantially decrease the life of our cars by driving them short distances with a cold engine. For some households, the ability to comfortably commute by bike could mean delaying a car purchase or even selling a car – saving thousands of dollars per year.

COMMUNITY/BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Reducing the high cost of parking — Land has become scarce in the University Circle area. In order to continue providing nearly every employee with automobile parking, garages must be built - commonly at a cost of more than \$15,000 per space. If monthly parking fees do not cover the cost of building and maintaining these spaces, institutions must spend precious resources to subsidize car storage. And when land is used for parking, it cannot be used for more advantageous purposes. Creating better conditions for bicycling can reduce the demand for structured parking, making our institutions more efficient and competitive.
- Environment (air, water, noise) — Short car trips create more air pollution than longer trips on a per-mile basis because engines don't operate as efficiently while cold. Dust from brakes and tires, plus leaking automotive fluids, are washed into storm drains and contaminate local streams like Doan Brook. And motor vehicle noise and vibration adds stress to our lives. All of these are eliminated when a trip by car is taken by bike.
- Competitive advantage — Finally, communities that provide transportation choices and work to improve their residents' and employees' quality of life may achieve a competitive advantage over more automobile-dominated neighborhoods and regions. Good bicycling is good business!

Why now?

It's timely to be thinking about the concept of a Circle-Heights Bike Network. It can dovetail nicely with a number of other planning and development efforts now underway:

- University Circle Inc. (UCI) is developing a master plan that, among other things, aims to improve the pedestrian character, bike facilities, and transit connections in the Circle.
- Cleveland Heights has completed a community visioning process that calls for enhancing the pedestrian/bike character of the city while reducing the impact of automobile-oriented design.
- Shaker Heights has done extensive planning to improve the design of the Lee-Chagrin and Warrensville-Van Aken areas. Ideas include narrowing streets and creating walkable retail centers.
- Shaker Square has been redeveloped, and, as the square becomes more popular, it will be important to offer people alternative ways to get there.
- The First Suburbs Consortium, the council of governments of Cleveland's inner-ring suburbs, has completed a retail marketing study of commercial districts in member communities. The study stresses that older commercial districts need to compete by offering walkable environments.
- Euclid Avenue between downtown and University Circle will soon be rebuilt with dedicated bus and bike lanes.
- At the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA, the region's transportation planning agency) there is substantial interest in funding transportation projects that promote multi-modal transportation and the revitalization of older communities.

In all these efforts, planners and citizens are talking about the need to promote multiple forms of transportation and create better places for people.



Problem intersections

The district has a number of intersections with large expanses of pavement and confusing traffic patterns. These intersections may not always have the highest traffic volumes, but they are poorly defined areas with long crossing distances. A bicyclist or pedestrian has a hard time knowing which way to look for oncoming traffic. These intersections need special traffic studies to better define the space and channel motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians through with predictability and comfort.

University Circle intersections: MLK/E. 105/East Blvd circle, MLK/Euclid/Chester/Stearns/East Blvd pretzel intersection, Cedar/MLK/Carnegie (at the previous two places existing bike paths dump bicyclists hopelessly into the intersection), Cedar/Ambleside/Murray Hill, Mayfield/Murray Hill, Euclid/Ford/Mayfield.

Shaker Square/Shaker Heights intersections: MLK/Fairhill, Kemper/Fairhill, Larchmere/N. Moreland/Kemper, Van Aken onto Shaker (north/westbound crossing the Rapid tracks), Lee/Van Aken, Lee/Chagrin, Warrensville/Van Aken/Chagrin.

Cleveland Heights intersections: Cedar/Euclid Heights/Overlook, Edgehill/Overlook, Cedar/Fairmount, Cedar/Lee, Coventry/Fairmount/Scarborough, Lee/Fairmount, Mayfield/Monticello/Superior/Lee area (need good connectors from recreation center to Cumberland pool, etc.), Coventry/Mayfield, Noble/Monticello.

More information

For updates on the development of the Circle-Heights Bike Network and other bicycle-related information – including safety tips, information about taking your bike aboard transit, and Ohio's bike-related laws – visit the bike section of the EcoCity Cleveland Web site at www.ecocitycleveland.org/transportation/bicycles/bikes.html.

Creating a bicycle-friendly district

The goal

Create a network of bike lanes, traffic-calmed

streets, designated bike routes, and other

facilities that will link major activity centers

with safe routes for bicycling.

Places to link

University Circle

Little Italy

Cedar-Fairmount

Cedar-Lee

Coventry

Cain Park

Lee-Chagrin

Shaker Square

Shaker Lakes

Schools and recreation centers

Severance Town Center

Cedar Center

The Circle-Heights concept

There is a special district on the east side of Cleveland. This district starts in the **University Circle** neighborhood and extends up the **Portage Escarpment** (Cedar Hill, Edgehill, Fairhill) to the surrounding Heights. It includes **Shaker Square** and the **Chagrin-Lee** area to the south and extends to **Warrensville Center Road** to the east. The district is divided among four cities – Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights, and University Heights – but it is united by similar history, culture, and community design. It forms a cohesive territory.

The “Circle-Heights” district covers a compact, four-by-four mile area. It was largely built during the streetcar era and features a fine-grain mix of residential neighborhoods and commercial districts. It has public places in which people actually like to walk around. And, unlike new suburban areas where destinations are so far apart that people have to drive everywhere, activity centers in the Heights district are spaced close together. Thus, the district is ideally laid out for alternative transportation – biking, walking, and transit.

It's time for the Circle-Heights district to take better advantage of this design attribute. With surprisingly little work, a comprehensive network of bike facilities can be created to knit the district together in a new way. This will create a real competitive advantage. The Circle-Heights district can become known as the place where families can get around in healthy ways and enjoy great streets and public spaces.