

METRO-MOBILITY TALKS

Online Rider And Non-Rider Bicycle Survey

Soliciting Feedback On Ways To Improve Conditions For Bicyclists

Improving transportation isn't limited to automobiles, motorcycles, trucks, and buses. It also extends to bicycles, which often share the road with their faster and more massive companions. Taking the needs of bicyclists into account is an important part of the transportation planning process, and an online survey designed by the Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is soliciting feedback on ways to improve conditions for bicyclists in our community.

Brigida C. Gonzalez, principal planner for the MPO, said the survey grew out of discussions by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee, which advises the City's Transportation Advisory Committee on bike and pedestrian issues. Representatives from various local public entities serve on the subcommittee along with a health and wellness professional, a bicycle shop owner, and bicyclists.

"The subcommittee found that when streets are resurfaced they aren't done in a way that is well-received by cyclists," said Gonzalez. The MPO developed its first bicycle and pedestrian plan in 2005, which included a map showing bicycle lanes, paths and trails.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), taking the subcommittee's comments under advisement, asked the subcommittee to come up with a list of bicycling-related priorities so that when it resurfaces or rehabilitates a street it might better accommodate bicyclists. The MPO, one of the public entities with a representative on the subcommittee, then offered to conduct a survey in regard to bicycling and update the map developed in 2005.

The MPO turned initially to the subcommittee for suggested survey questions, Gonzalez said, but found it would be beneficial if a broader array of participants helped develop the comprehensive set of questions. That's because bicyclist have differing levels of interest and enthusiasm for the activity.

"Someone who rides a \$2,500 bike doesn't have the same needs and wants as someone who rides a \$79 special like I do," Gonzalez said. "Some people only ride on paths and trails and some prefer to ride on streets. Some ride for relaxation and fun; others ride to improve or maintain their physical fitness." And others ride to and from work or school, she said.

To get a wider range of questions, the MPO assembled an ad hoc committee consisting of an array of bicyclists from the "high-end" to the casual. A representative from the City's Park and Recreation Department and someone whose recreational interests went beyond cycling also served on the committee.

It took two months to develop the survey questions, Gonzalez said, and after a test run and modifications, including shortening the testing time to seven minutes, the survey was launched on the MPO website (www.corpuschristi-mpo.org) on October 24. The survey is actually two surveys – one for riders and one for non riders. It also can be found on the RTA (www.ccrra.org) and Central Libraries (www.cclibraries.com) websites.

After five weeks, more than 350 people had taken the survey, Gonzalez said, with slightly more riders than non riders participating. The survey will continue online for at least 90 days by which time it is hoped that 400 or more people will have completed it. In addition to the websites, Bay Area Bicycles set up a kiosk where customers can take the survey using a laptop computer. The MPO also sent information about the survey to area independent school districts, TAMU-CC, Del Mar College, BoldFuture of the Coastal Bend, and Destination Bayfront.

BoldFuture of the Coastal Bend also highlighted the survey in a Caller-Times advertisement because it reinforces the partnership between it and the MPO and the survey complements efforts of BoldFuture's Safe, Healthy Communities Action Team.

The MPO will use an online service to tabulate survey results. The results should be presented to the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee by late spring or early summer and from there the MPO will update its map and present information to those entities responsible for resurfacing streets so that they can consider road improvements designed to better accommodate bicyclists.

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