

BIKES IN THE BOARDROOM

Major corporations going bicycle friendly

BY AMELIA NEPTUNE

Apple. Microsoft. Target. 3M. What do they all have in common? They're all Fortune 100 companies, and their headquarters are each designated as a Bicycle Friendly Business.

In recent years, the Bicycle Friendly Business program has seen a new trend that bodes well for the growth of the bike movement: corporate campuses are going bicycle-friendly. These are companies that employ tens of thousands of people and touch the lives of millions every day through their products and services. And now they are making bicycling a priority for their workplaces, and they're seeking the Bicycle Friendly Business designation to prove it.

What's behind this trend in bicycle friendly corporations? For some, becoming bicycle-friendly is a part of overall corporate excellence: offering their employees the very best in services and amenities. For others, issues around health and sustainability are driving these efforts. More bicycle commuters lead to lower healthcare costs, reduced rates of absenteeism, and a more active, alert, and productive workforce, not to mention reducing the company's environmental impact and carbon footprint. Of course, this is true for a Bicycle Friendly Business of any size, but when you have 5,000+ em-

ployees working at a single site, the impact is significant.

Employee recruitment and retention is another common motivation. Being a Bicycle Friendly Business helps companies attract and retain the very best and brightest — employees who are looking for convenient commutes, an active lifestyle, and a vibrant, healthy community to live and work in — particularly as peer companies around the country do the same. Of course, at some corporations, the efforts to become more bicycle friendly are entirely employee-driven, or in response to employee demand. As

ridership levels nationwide have gone up, large employers are facing increasing demand for facilities and programs to accommodate the rising ridership levels at their workplaces.

How are corporations bringing these benefits to their workplace through bicycling? Although each Bicycle Friendly Business is unique, we've noticed some recurring themes among corporate campuses that add to their success as BFBs.

» DEDICATED STAFF: Larger companies often have the resources — and the need — to hire a full-time staff person responsible for bicycle initiatives. Among corporate applicants we see full-time job titles like Bike Infrastructure Manager (Facebook, Platinum BFB), Transportation Program Manager (LinkedIn, Silver BFB), and Commute Program Manager (Apple, Silver BFB). Human Resources, wellness, sustainability, and corporate responsibility staff are also often responsible for these efforts as a part of their official job description for the corporation.

» BIKE SHARING: Because many of these corporate campuses contain several buildings spread out over large areas, bike sharing makes great sense for these larger workplaces. Whether to help employees travel between buildings for meetings or al-



Facebook



3M celebrates its bronze award

lowing them to take a leisurely ride during lunch shared bicycles are a fantastic perk and a good way to encourage new ridership. Facebook (Platinum BFB) has three different bike fleets totaling almost 200 bicycles for long- and short-term use by employees. USAA (Silver BFB) offers bicycles and tricycles to help their employees move from one end of their main building to the other. For corporations located in urban areas, free access to existing public bike share systems is more common. Target headquarters (Platinum BFB), located in downtown Minneapolis, not only sponsored a dedicated NiceRide station on their property but also offers 100 free annual subscriptions and 1,000 free day passes to their 10,000 on-site employees.

» **FACILITIES:** More and more corporate campuses offer indoor, secured bike storage for employees, often with free tools and work stands available for bike repairs. These dedicated bike rooms also provide a great space for regular maintenance and safety classes, bike buddy connections, and a permanent place to share local bicycling information such as bike maps and rules of the road. And not far from these bike rooms, you will frequently find dedicated locker rooms for cyclists, sometimes with luxurious showers and free towel service!

» **ACTIVE BIKE CLUB:** Active participation and input from employees who bike is a critical component of a successful BFB, particularly at larger companies. These groups provide a support network to new cyclists, and a coordinated feedback mechanism to communicate the needs of bike commuters with company decision makers. At 3M headquarters (Bronze BFB), the employee-run Bicycle User Group is open to any employee and has 1,500+ members in its internal online community. Members of the group meet for lunch every other week and worked together to complete the Bicycle Friendly Business application, as well as helping to secure 3M's financial support for and active participation in the National Bike Challenge.

» **PARTNERSHIPS:** Partnering with local governments, advocacy organizations, and outside vendors is critical for aspiring bicycle friendly corporate campuses. Texas Instruments (Bronze BFB) in Plano, TX, worked with the North Central Texas Council of Governments on the Cottonwood Trail extension adjacent to their headquarters, a 35-mile trail that will enable employees to safely walk or bike to work. Both Target and Microsoft (Silver BFB) headquarters work with outside vendors to provide on-site,

subsidized tune-ups for bike commuters, classes, incentives, and more. Dow Agro-Sciences (Bronze BFB), in Indianapolis, offers a Guaranteed Ride Home program through Central Indiana's Commuter Connect program, which allows for simple administration of this benefit for the company's 1,400 employees.

Perhaps most importantly, these corporations have a huge impact on their surrounding community, both in their physical presence and the number of people they employ, not to mention the financial and political power they hold locally and nationally. Partnerships that reach beyond the borders of their campus to benefit community groups and advocacy efforts are a critical piece of how these businesses become bicycle friendly. Whether it's supporting bicycle outreach efforts in low-income communities (Target), donating land for the expansion of trails (Texas Instruments), organizing employees to donate hundreds of bikes to a community bike shop (3M), or partnering with the League on our programs (Kimberly-Clark, Gold BFB), these corporations are helping create a more Bicycle Friendly America, for everyone. ■ AMELIA NEPTUNE IS THE LEAGUE'S BICYCLE FRIENDLY AMERICA PROGRAM SPECIALIST. LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BICYCLE FRIENDLY BUSINESS PROGRAM AT [HTTP://BIKELEAGUE.ORG/CONTENT/BUSINESSES](http://BIKELEAGUE.ORG/CONTENT/BUSINESSES).