

Guide to the Bicycle Friendly State Report Card

2017 Edition

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Introduction

The Bicycle Friendly State Report Card is intended to provide highlighted information about each state to provide a useful comparison between states and serve as a reference for state efforts related to bicycling.

This guide will provide background information on each of the data points on the Report Card. It is our hope that this background will answer questions about where this data comes from and how it should be interpreted.

It is important to note that the data on the Report Card do not necessarily reflect the totality of a state's efforts related to bicycling. The Report Card also does not explicitly consider factors such as natural beauty, weather, or culture that may affect riding in a state. While the majority of data relate to actions by a state Department of Transportation, the data is not limited to things within the control or influence of a state Department of Transportation. Many states have efforts that do not fit within the survey and public data used to create the Report Card.

Explanation of Ranking

The ranking for each state is based upon a weighted score based upon the state's score in each of the five categories listed on the Report Card. The weighted category scores are supplemented by discretionary scoring that accounts for 10% of each state's potential score. We include discretionary scoring to account for erroneous survey data, states with missing data, and other factors that do not easily fit within the survey data and public data used for the category scores.

- Infrastructure & Funding – 20%
- Education & Encouragement – 15%
- Legislation & Enforcement – 15%
- Policies & Programs – 20%
- Evaluation & Planning – 20%
- Discretionary Scoring – 10%

History of Ranking

The Bicycle Friendly State program began in 2008. The primary output of the Bicycle Friendly State program since that time has been an annual ranking of each state according to publicly available data and survey data completed by contacts at state Departments of Transportation or state advocacy organizations. Data on rankings over time is available at http://bikeleague.org/sites/default/files/Historical_ranking_chart.pdf. Report cards were introduced to the program in 2012 and are available upon request.

The best way to explore data from the history of the program is by using the data produced in *Bicycling and Walking in the United States: A Benchmarking Report*. This report has been published since 2007 and has shared a common survey with the Bicycle Friendly State program since 2012. Over five editions it has published the raw data that is analyzed to create our Bicycle Friendly State ranking without the editorial weighting used to create the ranking. The most recent Benchmarking Report can be explored at bikingandwalkingbenchmarks.org.

What's on the Report Card?

Bicycle Friendly America Participation

Each Report Card includes data on the participation by communities, businesses, and universities within each state in other Bicycle Friendly America (BFA) programs. The Bicycle Friendly State program is the only non-voluntary BFA program. All other BFA program participation depends upon participants to complete an application.

- Bicycle Friendly Community – The Bicycle Friendly Community program is based upon a free application that is available to all communities. Since the creation of the Bicycle Friendly Community program in 1995 there have been over 1500 community applications processed by League staff. There are currently 416 recognized Bicycle Friendly Communities and over 100 Honorable Mention communities in all 50 states.
- Bicycle Friendly Business – The Bicycle Friendly Business program is based upon a paid application that is available to all communities. The application fee is based upon the size of the organization: http://bikeleague.org/BFB_Fee_Deadline. There are currently 1,367 recognized Bicycle Friendly Businesses in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- Bicycle Friendly University – The Bicycle Friendly University program is based upon a free application that is available to all communities. The application fee for universities is a flat fee regardless of university size. There are a variety of discounts available for certain types of universities, including historically black colleges and universities, women's colleges, and community colleges: <https://bicyclefriendly.secure-platform.com/a/page/university/BFUfee>. There are currently 164 recognized Bicycle Friendly Universities in 44 states and the District of Columbia.

State Advocacy Group(s)

The group(s) identified on the report card is any group that is an organizational member of the League of American Bicyclists and has been identified as a statewide advocacy organization. Member organizations of the League of American Bicyclists are:

- Eligible to participate in the League's insurance program;
- Listed in the League's Cycling in Your Area Guide;
- Eligible to have events listed in the League's Cycling in Your Area Guide;
- Eligible for discounted registration for the National Bike Summit, held annually in Washington, D.C.; and
- Invited to participate in Bicycle Friendly America local review processes.

Advocacy organizations identify themselves as state organizations. It is a membership type and the League did not review mission statements or actions by our organizational members before listing them on the report card. They are listed because they joined and/or renewed as a state advocacy organization.

State Summary

The state summary is intended to provide a narrative description of the state's Bicycle Friendly State ranking and how the state might improve its ranking. It should be thought of as a quick guide and reference that helps contextualize the state's ranking. The state summary is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of all the data examined to determine the state's ranking. If a state summary references another state, the 2017 ranking that of the referenced state is denoted by the number of its 2017 ranking in parentheses, as in Washington (#1).

Feedback Points

Feedback Points are generated by each state’s answers to the Bicycle Friendly State survey as well as input from state advocates as part of the local review process and discretionary decisions by League of American Bicyclists staff. Most Feedback Points are generated from survey data and reflect areas where:

- a state does not have a policy, program, or law that is highly valued by the Bicycle Friendly State ranking;
- a state has a law or policy that is considered detrimental to bicycling by the League of American Bicyclists; or
- a state underperforms on an output metric based upon federal data.

Most Feedback Points are not customized or minimally customized to reflect underlying state practices. The primary purpose of each Feedback Point is to clearly identify an area for improvement and suggest a possible solution. The solution most suitable to any given state may be different than the solution suggested by a Feedback Point.

Comparison States

Two sets of comparison states are provided on the Report Card:

- The state’s ranking relative to all other states – the National (Overall) comparison, and
- The state’s ranking within the state’s region – the Regional comparison.

For purposes of the Bicycle Friendly State Report Card, states are split into four regions. Each region, and the states contained within each region, are listed below. States are listed in alphabetical order within their region.

Eastern Region	Southern Region	Midwestern Region	Western Region
Connecticut	Alabama	Illinois	Alaska
Delaware	Arkansas	Indiana	Arizona
Maine	Florida	Iowa	California
Maryland	Georgia	Kansas	Colorado
Massachusetts	Kentucky	Michigan	Hawaii
New Hampshire	Louisiana	Minnesota	Idaho
New Jersey	Mississippi	Missouri	Montana
New York	North Carolina	Nebraska	Nevada
Pennsylvania	South Carolina	North Dakota	New Mexico
Rhode Island	Tennessee	Ohio	Oregon
Vermont	Texas	Oklahoma	Utah
	Virginia	South Dakota	Washington
	West Virginia	Wisconsin	Wyoming

Bicycle Friendly Actions

Each Bicycle Friendly State Report Card includes five Bicycle Friendly Actions (Actions). These Actions reflect input metrics that are entirely within the control of a state’s Department of Transportation, legislature, or other state agency. They are labeled as “Bicycle Friendly Actions” because the League believes that these metrics are evidence of successful agency, legislative, or advocacy actions that set the stage for improvements in the safety and mobility of people who bike within a state. In prior versions of the Bicycle Friendly State program these Actions were referred to as “Signs of Success.”

On the Report Card, blue and orange checkmarks identify Bicycle Friendly Actions for each state. Blue checkmarks identify an Action that a state has had in the past. Orange checkmarks identify states where “New Progress in 2017” has occurred, this includes any changes and updates to an existing Action that has occurred since 2015.

Each of the Bicycle Friendly Actions, and the way in which we determine whether a state has taken an Action, is explained below.

Complete Streets

Complete Streets, according to the [National Complete Streets Coalition](#), are “**are streets for everyone**. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.... By adopting a Complete Streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers to **routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users**, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation.”

For our Bicycle Friendly State Report Cards, the League uses data from the National Complete Streets Coalition’s [Inventory of all Complete Streets policies](#) to determine whether a state receives the Complete Streets Law/Policy Bicycle Friendly Action. That Inventory identifies at least three ways in which states can adopt Complete Streets – through a resolution, policy, or law. In our scoring of the Complete Streets topic we differentiate between these methods, but for the Bicycle Friendly Action any method results in a checkmark.

Safe Passing law

Safe passing laws require vehicles to pass each other at a safe distance. In most states, legislatures have recognized that “safe distance” requires further definition, particularly for motor vehicles passing people on bicycles. The Safe Passing Law Bicycle Friendly Action recognizes states that have adopted a law that specifically defines a safe distance for a motor vehicle passing a person on a bicycle.

There are three common ways that states have chosen to define a “safe distance” in a way recognized by the League of American Bicyclists:

- A safe distance is defined as a specific distance in terms of feet, as in “no less than three feet;”
- A safe distance is defined as a variable distance in terms of feet, with a minimum safe distance that may increase based upon factors such as the speed or size of a passing vehicle; and
- A safe distance is defined as “a distance sufficient to prevent contact with the person operating the bicycle if the person were to fall into the driver’s lane of traffic.”

Some states also provide exceptions to their law that requires a minimum safe passing distance for a motor vehicle passing a person on a bicycle. The League of American Bicyclists believes that these exceptions undermine the educational and enforcement aspects of a Safe Passing law. In our scoring of the Laws that Create Protections for People who Bike and Walk topic we differentiate between states that do not provide exceptions and those that do, but for the Bicycle Friendly Action any law that includes one of the definitions above results in a checkmark.

The League of American Bicyclists has a [model safe passing law](#) for states or communities within states that would like to adopt a strong safe passing law to protect people who bike. A list of all current safe passing laws is available as part of our [Bike Law University](#) series.

Statewide Bike Plan

According to the [Federal Highway Administration](#), “State DOTs provide leadership regarding walking and bicycling in many ways. For example, some State DOTs use their pedestrian and bicycle plans to describe policies for how they will improve conditions for walking and bicycling through their transportation investments.” While there is no one format for a statewide bicycle plan, all states can benefit from a plan that serves as a basis for collaboration between the state DOT and local authorities, as well as the development of state DOT built projects and institutional competencies that will improve bicycle planning and conditions for bicycling over time.

In our scoring of the State DOT Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan topic we differentiate between plans based upon a variety of aspects, but for the Bicycle Friendly Action any plan adopted within the last 10 years results in a checkmark.

Bicycle Safety Emphasis Area

According to the [Federal Highway Administration](#), “A Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) is a major component and requirement of the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) (23 U.S.C. § 148). It is a statewide-coordinated safety plan that provides a comprehensive framework for reducing highway fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.” In [addition](#), “SHSP goals must be consistent with the safety performance measures. As such, FHWA expects SHSP goals to consider reductions in serious injuries and fatalities for all road users on all public roads. States could also adopt SHSP goals that correspond to each of the safety performance measures, [including the] number of non-motorized fatalities and non-motorized serious injuries.”

Each SHSP has Emphasis Areas, which identify safety topic within the state, and strategies, which identify actions meant to address the topic identified in an Emphasis Area. This Bicycle Friendly Action is based upon Emphasis Areas and not strategies. While each state is required to set a safety performance measure that includes non-motorized fatalities and non-motorized serious injuries, according to 23 U.S.C. 150, states are not required to identify bicyclist safety as an emphasis area.

The League of American Bicyclists is aware that some strategies include actions that we disagree with, such as adopting mandatory all rider bicycle helmet laws, but for the Bicycle Friendly State Report Card, our analysis is based on Emphasis Areas only. We believe this is appropriate because the Emphasis Areas provide insight into whether bicyclist safety is a priority for the state regardless of the actions that the state is considering as strategies to improve bicyclist safety. We disagree with actions such as mandatory all rider bicycle helmet laws because we believe that there is compelling evidence that those actions do not reduce the risk of bicyclist fatalities and serious injuries at the population level. We believe that a state that has chosen bicyclist safety as a priority is likely to make the same determination over time.

For the Bicycle Safety Emphasis Bicycle Friendly Action, we use State Strategic Highway Safety Plan data provided by the FHWA’s SHSP [Community of Practice](#). The Community of Practice maintains a [database](#) that includes searchable Emphasis Area categories, including “Ped/Bike.” We include the results of that search as well as a more comprehensive keyword search of all Emphasis Areas in the database. Any state that has at least one Emphasis Area that includes the keyword “bicycle” or a derivative of “bicycle” receives a checkmark for this Bicycle Friendly Action.

2% or more Fed Funds on Bike/Ped

According to the [Federal Highway Administration](#), “pedestrian and bicycle projects are eligible for funding through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program, Surface Transportation Program (STP), Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), National Highway Performance Program (NHPP), Federal Lands and

Tribal Transportation Programs (FLTTP) and [Transportation Alternatives Program] TAP.” While this guidance does not reflect the conversion of TAP to the STP Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside under the Fixing American’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, it still reflects the broad eligibility for biking and walking projects provided by federal transportation funding.

Our 2% threshold is based upon the historical funding level for the Transportation Alternatives Program, as set in the federal transportation bill that preceded the FAST Act. While the [League of American Bicyclists](#) would prefer more federal funding for biking and walking, this baseline is a useful shorthand for whether or not a state Department of Transportation is making an effort to at least spend transportation funding on bicycling and walking projects in proportion to the programmatic priorities set by Congress.

For the 2% or more Fed Funds on Bike/Ped Bicycle Friendly Action, we use data provided by FHWA’s Fiscal Management Information System (FMIS). Our determination of spending is based upon five fiscal years (FY2012-16) of data on obligations. An obligation is a legal commitment by the Federal government to pay a State for the Federal share of a project’s eligible cost. It is not “spending” as a normal person would understand it, but it is the legal commitment to transfer cash at a later date and those funds are considered “used” as soon as they are obligated.

In our scoring of the Use of Federal Transportation Funding topic we use a formula that looks at per capita bicycling and walking spending, bicycling and walking spending as a percentage of all federal transportation spending, and the number of programs used for bicycling and walking projects. For this Bicycle Friendly Action, states with 2% or more of its federal spending coded as bike/ped spending results in a checkmark.

Federal Data on Biking

The Federal government collects and requires states to collect a variety of data related to bicycling, in addition to directly funding research on bicycling and walking. The Federal Data on Biking table presents data from three federal data sources that provide updated data on an annual basis. These data reflect output metrics that are not entirely within the control of a state's Department of Transportation, legislature, or other state agency.

Ridership

This figure is based upon the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 2015 5-year estimate.

The American Community Survey was created after the 2000 Census as an alternative to the previous "long-form" Census. Each year about 1 in 38 U.S. households receive an invitation to participate in the ACS. Data on bicycling to work comes from Question 31, which asks "How did this person usually get to work LAST WEEK? If this person, usually used more than one method of transportation during the trip, mark (X) the box of the one used for most of the distance." Bicycle is one of 12 potential answers to that question.

According to the once-a-decade National Household Travel Survey, travel to and from work comprises about 16 percent of daily trips. The use of data only on this subset of trip types for all estimates of state bicycle ridership is problematic because it misses variations between states in the any other type of bicycling. There are also numerous [other issues](#) with ACS data.

The League uses ACS data because it is the only nationwide data set available on an annual basis that allows state-to-state comparisons. We look forward to the day when better data that allows annual state-to-state comparisons is available.

Safety

This figure is based upon fatalities reported over a five-year period according to the National Highway Administration (NHTSA)'s Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the 2015 5-year ACS estimate of the number of bicycle commuters.

The League of American Bicyclists believes that providing fatality data in the context of the number of bicycle commuters is the best currently possible way to adjust for differences in rates of bicycling between states. While bicycle commuting only represents about 13% of all bicycling trips according to 2009 [National Household Travel Survey](#) data, it is the only type of bicycling that nationwide publicly available data on an annual basis.

[FARS](#) is based upon a census of fatal traffic crashes. To be included in FARS, a crash must involve a motor vehicle traveling on a public roadway and must result in the death of at least one person within 30 days of the crash. FARS data is provided to NHTSA by an agency in each state government according to a cooperative agreement which specifies that the state will take state data and code it into the standard FARS format. Since states are responsible for the underlying data, FARS is not based upon one uniform source of data, but may be based on a combination of information from police accident reports, death certificates, State coroners and medical examiners, State driver and vehicle registration records, and emergency medical services records.

Spending

FHWA spending is based upon obligations coded using any of three project types associated with bicycling and walking projects through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)'s [Fiscal Management Information System](#). To calculate per capita spending, we used a five-year average for fiscal years 2011-2016 and the 2015 5-year ACS state population estimate.

Our determination of spending is based upon five fiscal years (FY2012-16) of data on obligations. An obligation is a legal commitment by the Federal government to pay a State for the Federal share of a project's eligible cost. It is not "spending" as a normal person would understand it, but it is the legal commitment to transfer cash later and those funds are considered "used" as soon as they are obligated.

Nationwide, our analysis of FMIS data shows that \$2.40 of federal transportation funding per person is spent on bicycling and walking project. FMIS data does not, and cannot, distinguish between spending on biking and walking. For this reason, FMIS data likely over-estimates the amount of federal funding for bicycling. [When asked](#) to distribute \$100 of taxes on transportation, American voters on average allocated \$26.90 to expand and improve walking and biking paths, and sidewalks.

For comparison's sake, here are what some other countries spend per capita on bicycling:

- [England](#) spends \$5.28 per capita on bicycling;
- [Netherlands](#) spends \$29.48 per capita on bicycling; and
- [Hungary](#) (whose GDP per capita is more than 4 times less than the U.S.) spends \$4.45 per capita on bicycling.

Category Scores

The second page of the Bicycle Friendly State Report Card has detailed scores from each category. These scores are provided based upon topics within each category. Each score is based upon one or more questions in the 2017 Bicycle Friendly State survey. The entire Bicycle Friendly State survey is 84 questions long, including questions that are completed by the League of American Bicyclists using publicly available data and reviewed by state Departments of Transportation. The full survey is available [here](#).

Infrastructure & Funding

The Infrastructure & Funding category is intended to provide insight on the level of investment in bicycling in each state. This includes questions about funding levels, funding programs, and the creation of bicycle infrastructure in the state.

This category often suffers from data-related issues. In particular, there are two issues that should be noted that may affect the comparability of states:

1. **Determining the amount of state funding spent or allocated to bicycling and walking can be very difficult.** Our historical survey data shows reported state funding can vary widely from year-to-year. Several reasons are given for why it is difficult to determine state funding for biking and walking, with three of the most common being:
 - a. For states with complete streets policies, bicycling and walking infrastructure may not be reported when it is created within a larger road project. Several states have made the argument that the cost of documenting these projects is prohibitive.
 - b. States often create significant bicycling and walking facilities through Departments of Natural Resources or other state agencies. These various agencies do not share reporting mechanism or funding legislation, so it is difficult to aggregate funding.
 - c. States may or may not report the state funds used to match federal funding when they report state funding spent on bicycling and walking. Generally a 20% match is required for federal funding.
2. **States often do not have processes in place to report on the planned and built bicycle infrastructure on a yearly basis.** Based upon comments from survey respondents, it does not appear that most states have databases that allow easy reports on the lane miles and types of bicycle infrastructure in a state. This may be an issue of multiple state agencies often being involved in the creation of bicycling infrastructure.

Topic	Survey Questions Included in Topic
Design and Existence of Infrastructure	IF5-12
State Transportation Funding	IF13 & IF14
Use of Federal Transportation Funding	IF1-4
Planned and Recently Built Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities	IF17-20
State Transportation Funding Restrictions	IF15 & IF16

Spotlight: How we score federal funding data

We assign 10 points based on a formula that considers federal transportation obligations to biking and walking projects as a percentage of all obligations and obligations to biking and walking projects per capita.

- There are 7 points assigned based on the percentage of obligations going to biking and walking projects, based on the taking each states percentage divided by the highest state percentage.

- There are 3 points assigned based on each state's per capita obligations divided by the highest state per capita obligation.

Education & Encouragement

The Education & Encouragement category is intended to provide insight into the level of bicycling in a state and public education efforts related to bicycling. This category has the fewest questions of any category and has high level of verification through linked public education materials. However, it should be noted that driver licensing is often done by an agency separate from the state Department of Transportation. This means that our survey respondents, most often state DOT bicycle staff, may not be able to answer those questions with the same specificity as other questions. While we have attempted to minimize the number of questions that ask about issues outside of the control of a state DOT, the potential value of driver licensing questions was high enough that we did not feel comfortable eliminating them.

Topic	Survey Questions Included in Topic
State DOT Education & Encouragement Support	EE6-9
Modeshare	EE2
Driver Education Requirements	EE4
Advocacy	EE1

Spotlight: How we score federal modeshare data

We assign 30 points based on 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS).

- Twenty points are based upon each state's 2015 5-year bike to work modeshare estimate. We assign those 20 points by taking each state's estimate and dividing that estimate by the second highest state estimate plus one standard deviation. The highest state estimate in every year of ACS data is Oregon and as of 2015 the estimate for Oregon is 3 standard deviations above the second highest estimate. Oregon gets full points, but does not get scored by the same formula.
- Ten points are based upon the percentage change between each state's 2010 5-year estimate and their 2015 5-year estimate. We assign those points by taking each state's percentage change and dividing it by the highest percentage change in the data set. When states have negative percentage changes, we allow negative points to be assigned.

Legislation & Enforcement

The Legislation & Enforcement category is intended to provide insight into the laws that govern traffic in each state. Generally, these questions look at the existence or non-existence of specific types of traffic laws. Data in this category is often produced by the League of American Bicyclists as part of our state [bike law resources](#). At times the issues for specific laws identified in our [Bike Law University](#) series are used to grade a particular type of law.

Topic	Survey Questions Included in Topic
Laws that regulate driver behavior and methods of enforcement	LE13-18
Laws that regulate the behavior of people who bike and walk	LE5-10
Laws that create protections for people who bike and walk	LE1-3, LE11
Laws that influence the built environment	LE12

Policies & Programs

The Policies & Programs category is intended to provide insight into the policies and programs that govern project development at a state Department of Transportation. The major focus of this category is complete streets, meaning that bicycle infrastructure will be routinely planned and built as part of bicycling being a legitimate mode of transportation in the state and on state roadways. This means that the focus is often on whether the state's policies are likely to create an extensive bicycle network, rather than attempting to determine the quality of the state's bicycle network.

Topic	Survey Questions Included in Topic
Complete Streets	PP1-6
Design and Access Policies	PP9-13
State of Practice Development	PP7 & PP8
Sustainable Transportation Policies	PP14 & PP15

Evaluation & Planning

The Evaluation & Planning category is intended to provide insight into the transportation planning framework of a state, including the development of processes that improve planning such as data collection. While a state bike plan is often a major contributor to the state's score in this category, states can fulfill aspects associated with a state bike plan without having a plan in place or having a plan that meets the criteria of our Bicycle Friendly Action associated with statewide bike plans.

Topic	Survey Questions Included in Topic
State DOT Bicycle & Pedestrian Plans	EP1-9
Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety	EP10-13
Understanding People who Bike and Walk	EP14-17
Formal User Group Engagement	EP18-22

The Benchmarking Report: Bicycling and Walking in the United States

Since 2012 the Bicycle Friendly State survey has been used as part of the [Benchmarking Report: Bicycling and Walking in the United States](#). The Benchmarking Report was first created by the Alliance for Biking & Walking in 2003 on a trial basis and became a biennial report in 2007. The 2017 Bicycle Friendly State survey will be used to create the 2018 Benchmarking Report, which will be the first edition of the report that is published by the League of American Bicyclists.

The use of the Bicycle Friendly State survey for the Benchmarking Report should be understood from the perspective that each project is intended to accomplish something different.

- The Bicycle Friendly State ranking is intended to provide a quick summary of each state with action items to improve the state's ranking. Historically, the Bicycle Friendly State ranking has not included much reporting of the survey data, whether aggregated or for each state. The focus is on providing a comparative framework for advocacy efforts and action.
- The Benchmarking Report is intended to promote data collection, measure progress, and support efforts to increase bicycling and walking. Historically, the Benchmarking Report has included extensive reporting of survey data. The focus is on providing a basis for comparison between states and over time.

Still have questions?

The Bicycle Friendly States ranking is based on a comprehensive survey completed by state departments of transportation and state bicycling advocates. For more information, visit bikeleague.org/states or contact Ken McLeod at (202)-822-1333 or ken@bikeleague.org.