WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Best Practice Study of Bike Friendly Universities: Sidewalks & Signage Policies

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Wesustain

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

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Definitions

From American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) manual 4th edition, 2012

Bike Lane: A portion of roadway that has been designated for preferential or exclusive use by bicyclists by pavement markings and, if used, signs. It is intended for one-way travel, usually in the same direction as the adjacent traffic lane, unless designed as a contra-flow lane.

Bike Path/Route: A roadway or bikeway designated by the jurisdiction having authority, either with a unique route designation or with Bike Route signs, along which bicycle guide signs may provide directional and distance information. Signs that provide directional, distance, and destination information for bicyclists do not necessarily establish a bicycle route.

Dismount Zone: A pathway or area (such as a plaza, square or mall) where riding of bicycles is prohibited and cyclists are required to dismount from their bicycle and walk along-side of it.

Shared Use Path: A bikeway physically separated from motor vehicle traffic by an open space of barrier and either within the highway right-of-way or within an independent right-of-way. Shared use paths may also be used by pedestrians, skaters, wheelchair users, joggers, and other non-motorized users. Most shared use paths are designed for two-way travel.

Sidewalk: That portion of a street or highway right-of-way, beyond the curb or edge of roadway pavement, which is intended for use by pedestrians.

Yield Area (Pedestrian Priority Zone): A pathway or area (such as a path, tunnel, or intersection) where riding of bicycles may pose a threat to pedestrian path users. In these areas, cyclists are required to operate at a low speed and yield right-of-way to pedestrians.

Executive Summary

In 2012, the Office for Sustainability began a focused effort to explore opportunities for Western Michigan University to safely increase the flow of pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized transportation to, from, and around campus. Non-motorized transportation is a complex system with boundaries existing outside the University, and there are innumerable components relating to the transportation decisions members of the campus community make every day. This report focuses on two key components of this system: inner-campus pathways and areas of particular pedestrian safety concern. The Office for Sustainability is engaged in parallel work that seeks to address related goals such as improving regional non-motorized infrastructure, increasing public access to bicycles, promoting safe ridership, increasing facilities such as bicycle parking and repair stations, etc. All of these system components, and more, must be addressed for meaningful, long-lasting and widespread changes to occur.

This report examines WMU's current ordinance relating to bicycling on campus. It then presents several case studies of ordinances at North American colleges and universities belonging to the League of American Bicyclist's Bike Friendly University program. Finally, it makes recommendations for how WMU can make strategic, cost-effective, and swift improvements to existing policies and facilities relating to shared-use pathways.

Our recommendation is that the University establish designated shared-use pathways rather than change it's existing ordinance banning bicycles on campus sidewalks. These pathways should form a comprehensive transportation network, be well marked with signs, and a period of heavy enforcement by Public Safety should follow their implementation.

Introduction

Western Michigan University is committed to climate neutrality by 2065 through the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment. Decreasing automobile use to, from, and around campus would significantly reduce campus greenhouse gas emissions. In 2009, WMU completed its first greenhouse gas emissions inventory and identified commuting as the second largest contributor to the University's carbon footprint (accounting for 21% of total emissions). In 2012, the authors of WMU's Climate Action Plan recommended that the University "improve infrastructure for non-motorized commuting options (mainly walking and cycling)," and "improve maintenance of non-motorized routes."

Increased usage of non-motorized transportation would also reduce demand for costly, automobile-focused infrastructure. WMU's Campus Master Plan states that bicycles "require less costly infrastructure and much less space for parking than automobiles. As a result, the University is committed to promoting increased bicycle use – as well as encouraging walking and improving transit service – to reduce vehicular congestion, parking demand, and the land and financial resources devoted to roadways and parking." Support for these goals was espoused in the WMU Fundamental Master Plan Concept 4, which called for "safe and efficient transit, bicycle and pedestrian circulation on and off campus." Additionally, increased use of non-motorized transportation would support WMU's Strategic Plan strategies 4.2, to "enhance the health and wellness of the community," and 5.2, to "advance environmental sustainability."

Methodology and data

Section 5.8 of WMU's current Traffic, Parking, and Pedestrian Ordinance states that "no person shall operate any bicycle upon other than established roadways, parking areas or bicycle paths." This policy is conspicuously unenforced by WMU Public Safety and nearly every campus cyclist violates it regularly. Therefore, in an effort to clearly understand how to reconcile existing policy with enforcement and practice, we sought to benchmark WMU against other schools' policies regarding shared-use pathways.

Our team began by identifying schools certified by the League of American Bicyclists as Bicycle Friendly Universities (BFUs). The BFU program "recognizes institutions of higher education for promoting and providing a more bicycle-friendly campus for students, staff and visitors". Schools self select for the program and must submit a standardized application to the League of American Bicyclists for consideration. Awards are based on the submitting school's non-motorized transportation infrastructure and level of engagement in advocacy and education. Awards are given at Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze levels.

We focused on policies from a representative sample of Platinum, Gold, and Silver BFU schools in addition to the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Michigan Technological University and Grand Valley State University. We included these Michigan schools to provide a regional context. It should be noted that University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Michigan Technological University hold BFU Bronze awards.

Our final list consisted of twenty-two universities (including WMU), listed in table 1 on page 5. We searched each school's website for traffic ordinances, codes or official policies relating to the use of bicycles on sidewalks and examples of how they communicated these policies to the public. Most policy documents were easy to find on public safety department web pages or through university publications or web pages for campus cyclists, but we also called

contacts at selected schools. When possible, we had photos of their systems sent to us for analysis. Several schools made use of standardized signs, from either the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) or AASHTO guides, while other schools had custom signs designed for their specific needs.

Best signage practices on BFU designated campuses

University of California, Santa Barbara, non-motorized traffic control is mostly done by enforcement and infrastructure. For example, bike paths are demarcated with lines to split paths into lanes for each direction of travel. There has been a conscientious effort to keep signage limited to avoid signage pollution, but some locations do use a "No Bike" sign at Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) cutouts on sidewalks to discourage pedestrian sidewalks from being ridden on by cyclists (figure 1). Additionally, A-frame sandwich boards are used at high priority/high traffic locations. The signs used indicate a pedestrian only area, instruct cyclists to dismount, and inform them of a $150 fine if they are found in violation of this policy. If a student receives a fine they can participate in the Fixit Ticket program, which allows them to take a cycling safety class with public safety in order to receive a reduced fine fee.

Figure 1: "No Bike" sign at ADA cutout

University of Arizona, Tucson makes use of the "No Bike" symbol at some ADA cutouts to deter cyclists from riding on pedestrian use sidewalks. Additionally, some standardized signage is used, including the MUTCD "Walk your Bike" sign, which is used at dismount zones and the "Yield to Peds" sign, which is used on shared use pathways (figure 2). Cycling is encouraged on roadways, which are marked with inlaid shared lane markings (also known as "sharrows") made from reflective thermoplastic (figure 6).

Figure 2: Standard MUTCD signs

Anecdotally, sidewalk signs have proven to be most effective when used in conjunction with posted signs. They also noted the importance of enforcement at the implementation of the program as being a key factor in successful implementation. A final piece of advice was to ensure that policies make sense in practice. They specifically noted the importance of connecting travel routes with bike parking infrastructure to encourage a higher rate of compliance.

Boise State University communicates their policy through signs and on pavement markings. Posted signs are used to indicate "pedestrian priority zones" while pavement markings are used as a visual indicator of where bikes should go (figure 3). They suggest making use of town hall format meetings to gauge public attitude regarding program decisions and concerns prior to implementation.

Figure 3: Pedestrian priority zone sign

Figure 4: Walk zone mobile A-frame

Figure 5: Shared-use sign

California State University, Long Beach advised us to look at examples from other schools, as they are still using a rudimentary signage program consisting primarily of laminated 24" x 24" A-frames to indicate dismount zones for cyclists.

The **University of California, Berkeley** has developed a modified MUTCD sign, which is both permanently posted, and used with a mobile, A-frame variant for temporary applications (figure 4).

The only signage currently in use at **Oregon State University** is pavement markings of the "no bike" symbol at some ADA cutouts to deter biking riding on pedestrian use sidewalks.

The **University of California, Irvine** employs proprietary signs to indicate time-based dismount zones, especially around the pedestrian mall area.

The **University of Wisconsin, Madison** uses pavement markings (Similar to MUTCD signs) on shared use pathways to keep bike traffic on the right and pedestrian traffic on left of the shared path (figure 5).

At the **University of Oregon**, thermoplastic marker inlays are used to indicate bike routes, which are used in addition to AASHTO style wayfaring signs. Thermoplastic "WALK" inlays are used to indicate dismount zones. Finally, roadways have shared lane markings to encourage cohabitation between cyclists and motorists. In their experience, pavement markers have proven to be the most effective strategy.

Georgia Institute of Technology has a limited implementation of non-motorized transportation control signage. Currently they make use of thermoplastic inlay sharrows on roadways (figure 6). There has been one problem area identified on campus, but they are still working to identify a policy to address this concern.

At the **University of Minnesota, Twin Cities**, there are a number of signage methods used. Thermoplastic shared lane markings designate shared roadways, and there are painted green bike boxes to protect cyclists at intersections. There are custom designed (proprietary) bike route signs to mark shared-use pathways and bike paths. Custom designed (proprietary) signs are also used to indicate dismount areas.

At the **University of Washington** Walk Zones were created in areas with high levels of congestion during peak transit times. At these locations, signs instruct cyclists to dismount. Compliance with signs has been low. Suggestions for improvement were to increase enforcement or develop infrastructure to keep cyclists from riding through dismount zones.


Figure 6: Shared lane marking

Discussion

Schools' policies fit into six categories. Four allowed sidewalk riding without exceptions, six forbade sidewalk riding without exceptions, four did not allow sidewalk riding unless pathways were designated for shared-use, three allowed sidewalk riding unless sidewalks were parallel to a street, one did not have a formal policy, and one allowed sidewalk riding except in designated pedestrian zones.

University	City	BFU	Cycling on sidewalks?	Notes
Stanford University	Stanford, CA	Platinum	Yes	No riding on sidewalks parallel to a street
University of California, Davis	Davis, CA	Gold	Yes	No riding on sidewalks parallel to a street
Boise State University	Boise, ID	Silver	Yes	
Colorado State University	Fort Collins, CO	Silver	Yes	No riding on sidewalks parallel to a street
University of California, Berkeley	Berkeley, CA	Silver	Yes	Riding allowed everywhere except designated Walk Zone
University Wisconsin, Madison	Madison, WI	Silver	Yes	No formal policy exists
Virginia Commonwealth University	Richmond, VA	Silver	Yes	
Michigan Technological University	Houghton, MI	Bronze	Yes	
University of Michigan	Ann Arbor, MI	Bronze	Yes	
Grand Valley State University	Allendale, MI	N/A	Yes	
Portland State University	Portland, OR	Gold	No	Sidewalks are bike routes if designated by signs
University of California, Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara, CA	Gold	No	
California State University, Long Beach	Long Beach, CA	Silver	No	
Georgia Institute of Technology	Atlanta, GA	Silver	No	
Oregon State University	Corvallis, OR	Silver	No	
University of Arizona, Tucson	Tucson, AZ	Silver	No	
University of California, Irvine	Irvine, CA	Silver	No	
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	Minneapolis, MN	Silver	No	Not unless marked as a bike lane
University of Oregon	Eugene, OR	Silver	No	Sidewalks are bike routes if designated by signage
University of Washington, Seattle	Seattle, WA	Silver	No	Bicycle dismount required in designated pedestrian zones
Michigan State University	East Lansing, MI	Bronze	No	
Western Michigan University	Kalamazoo, MI	N/A	No	Riding allowed only on designated bike paths

Table 1: Policies for cycling on sidewalks at BFU schools

Michigan State University, UC Long Beach, Oregon State, Georgia Tech, UC Irvine and University of Arizona, Tucson were the schools that forbade riding on sidewalks and did not have a special clause for bike paths. We concluded that most of these schools did not actively enforce their policies based on conversations with school representatives, campus visits, and web searches. Some, such as Oregon State University, have enough cycling specific infrastructure that it does not seem to be a problem.

University of Washington, Seattle, allowed sidewalk riding (except in designated pedestrian zones) making it the only school whose policy gave special privileges to pedestrians over cyclists.

With the exception of Georgia Institute of Technology (where only shared lane markings were used), all schools we contacted made use of various signs. The most common signs used were "No Bike" signs on the pavement at ADA cutouts. Other common signs include A-frames for dismount zones or yield, Pedestrian-zone signs, and way-faring signs. While the majority of schools made use of standardized signs, either from AASHTO or the MUTCD, University of Minnesota and UC Irvine chose to use proprietary designs.

Shared lane markings were used by four schools as part of their program. These include University of Arizona, University of Oregon, Georgia Institute of Technology and University of Minnesota. A representative from the University of Oregon stated that they found on-pavement markings to be highly effective.

UC Santa Barbara, University of Arizona, and University of Washington also emphasized the importance of enforcement, stating that after development and implementation of policy there must be comprehensive, consistent enforcement to ensure adoption. At UC Santa Barbara, they incorporate a learning aspect into enforcement by allowing violators to receive a reduced fine by taking a cycling safety class.

When discussing their non-motorized transportation policies, both University of Arizona and University of Washington emphasized the importance of a well planned program, especially in terms of connectivity. They pointed out that no matter how comprehensive a non-motorized transportation policy is on paper, it will not fair well in the real world no matter how good the signage, enforcement and other aspects are if it does not connect key areas on campus. Planners are advised to pay attention to areas of importance to cyclists, such as transit routes, ingress and egress points, eating locations and parking facilities. If these are not accessible by designated bike routes, then cyclists are more likely to violate policies, even if well thought out.

Conclusion

Western Michigan University encourages cycling to, from, and around campus by providing bicycle racks near most campus buildings and by not enforcing existing policy against riding on sidewalks. WMU's 2012 Climate Action Plan recommends the University "improve infrastructure for non-motorized commuting options (mainly walking and cycling)." Multiple schools, including UC Santa Barbara, UW Madison and University of Washington, emphasized the necessity of sufficient infrastructure. They proposed that if sufficient bicycle facilities are established, then it becomes visibly apparent where bikes do and do not belong on campus.

Ideally, WMU would install additional infrastructure, such as bike lanes and side paths, to encourage legal cycling on campus. However, these infrastructure improvements would be costly and in some cases impractical (such as adding bicycle lanes to narrow portions of the Ring Road). Therefore, to reconcile existing policy with enforcement in a practical and economical way, WMU should identify and designate a network of shared-use pathways along existing sidewalks. A preliminary shared-use pathway network can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

Recommendations

Based on our research and conversations with representatives from the Bike Friendly Universities, successful Non-Motorized Transportation Policies are multifaceted, cooperative, employ a multi-stage approach and overall, are system-based. The signage package must be viewed from a systems perspective, to ensure that it makes sense in terms of connectivity, designations need to grant cyclists sanctioned routes allowing non-motorized access to campus facilities.

Our recommendation consists of adopting and implementing a standardized signage program, drawing from AASHTO and MUTCD, for shared use of campus roadways and pathways. To keep the program simple and unified and to reduce confusion, we also recommend that WMU signage maintain visual consistency with NMT signage from the city of Kalamazoo. The signage program should consist of the following elements:

1) Signage Package Development:

A comprehensive signage identity will need to be developed. Inclusion of the sign shop in development of a signage package would ensure uniformity with other signs on campus. Ideally, a package would consist of both on-path markings and posted signage.

2) Shared Use Pathway Designation:

Select pathways wider than 8 feet should be designated as "shared use pathways" for both cyclists and pedestrians. A full guide can be found on the attached map in Appendix 2.

3) Shared Lane Markings:

Shared lane markings "sharrows" should be added to campus roadways. Markings should be added to roadways to encourage cyclists to stay off of adjacent sidewalks, and to alert motorists to expect the presence of cyclists in roadways. All streets that serve as possible ingress/egress points for campus should be marked, including areas such as the Ring Road and the Benhard Center hill.

4) Pedestrian Priority Zones:

These areas have been identified as areas of concern primarily due to concerns for possible collisions between cyclists and pedestrians. These zones will require signage, which will indicate for cyclists to dismount.

5) Implementation:

The intervention should phased-in cooperatively with Public Safety. This will ensure proper enforcement of the new protocols and will help integrate the new procedures into existing campus culture.

6) Continuous Improvement:

Areas marked as points of interested for continued research, should be monitored to determine if additional intervention strategies need to be developed in order to mitigate specific, potentially problematic areas, known as "hot-spots".

Appendix 1: Contact List

University	Contact	Title	Phone	E-mail
Stanford University	Ariadne Scott	Bicycle Program Coordinator	(650) 725-2453	adscott@stanford.edu
University of California, Berkeley	Kira Stoll	Sustainability Manager	(510) 642-0074	stoll@berkeley.edu
University of California, Davis	David Takemoto-Weerts	Bicycle Program Coordinator	(530) 752-2453	dltakemotoweerts@ucdavis.edu
University of California, Santa Barbara	James Wagner	Program Manager, Transportation Alternatives Program	(805) 893-5475	james.wagner@tps.ucsb.edu
Boise State University	Brian Ohlen	Coordinator, Cycle Learning Center	(208) 426-5668	brianohlen@boisestate.edu
California State University, Long Beach	Elissa Thomas	Sustainable Transportation Coordinator	(562) 985-4091	elissa.thomas@csulb.edu
Colorado State University	Jennifer Johnson	Bike Infrastructure Coordinator	(970) 491-2492	jennifer.johnson@colostate.edu
Georgia Institute of Technology	Marcia Kinstler	Director of Sustainability	(404) 894-9289	marcia.kinstler@business.gatech.edu
Oregon State University	Rainier Farmer	Chair, Alternative Transportation Advisory Committee	(541) 737-7080	rainier.farmer@oregonstate.edu
Portland State University	Ian Stude	Transportation Options Manager	(503) 725-9015	istude@pdx.edu
University of Arizona, Tuscon	Charles Franz	Alternative Transportation Program Manager	(520) 621-8692	cfranz@email.arizona.edu
University of California, Irvine	Ramon Zavala	Sustainable Transportation Supervisor	(949) 824-3940	zavalar@uci.edu
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	Steve Sanders	Alternative Transportation Manager	(612) 626-7275	sande017@umn.edu
University of Oregon	Briana Orr	Bike Program Coordinator	(541) 346-9142	borr@uoregon.edu
University of Washington, Seattle	David Amiton	Transportation Analyst	(206) 616-7493	damiton@u.washington.edu
University of Wisconsin, Madison	Charles Strawser	Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator	(608) 263-2969	cstrawser@fpm.wisc.edu
Virginia Commonwealth University	Brantley Tyndall	Alternative Transportation Coordinator	(804) 628-1199	tyndallcb@vcu.edu
University of Michigan	Public Safety		(734) 764-1817	public.safety@umich.edu
Michigan State University	MSU Bikes	Tim Potter	(517) 432-3400	bikes@msu.edu
Grand Valley State University	Lindsey DesArmo	Health & Wellness Coordinator		desarmli@gvsu.edu
Michigan Technological University	George Dewey	Advisor, Bike Advisory Committee	(906) 487-2522	gdewey@mtu.edu

Appendix 2: Campus Routes Map

The map illustrates several categories of pathways:

- **Purple** is used to designate pedestrian pathways, these are to serve as walking-only paths.
- **Orange** represents shared-use pathways, where both cycling and walking are allowed.
- **Green** roads are shared-lane marker suggestions to encourage safe co-travel between motorists and cyclists.
- **Blue** paths represent preexisting on-road bike lanes, which are to be used exclusively by bicycle traffic.

In addition to pathways there are also markings suggesting dismount zones ( ) and research points ( ), where additional traffic count data needs to be collected before the path's suggested use can be designated.

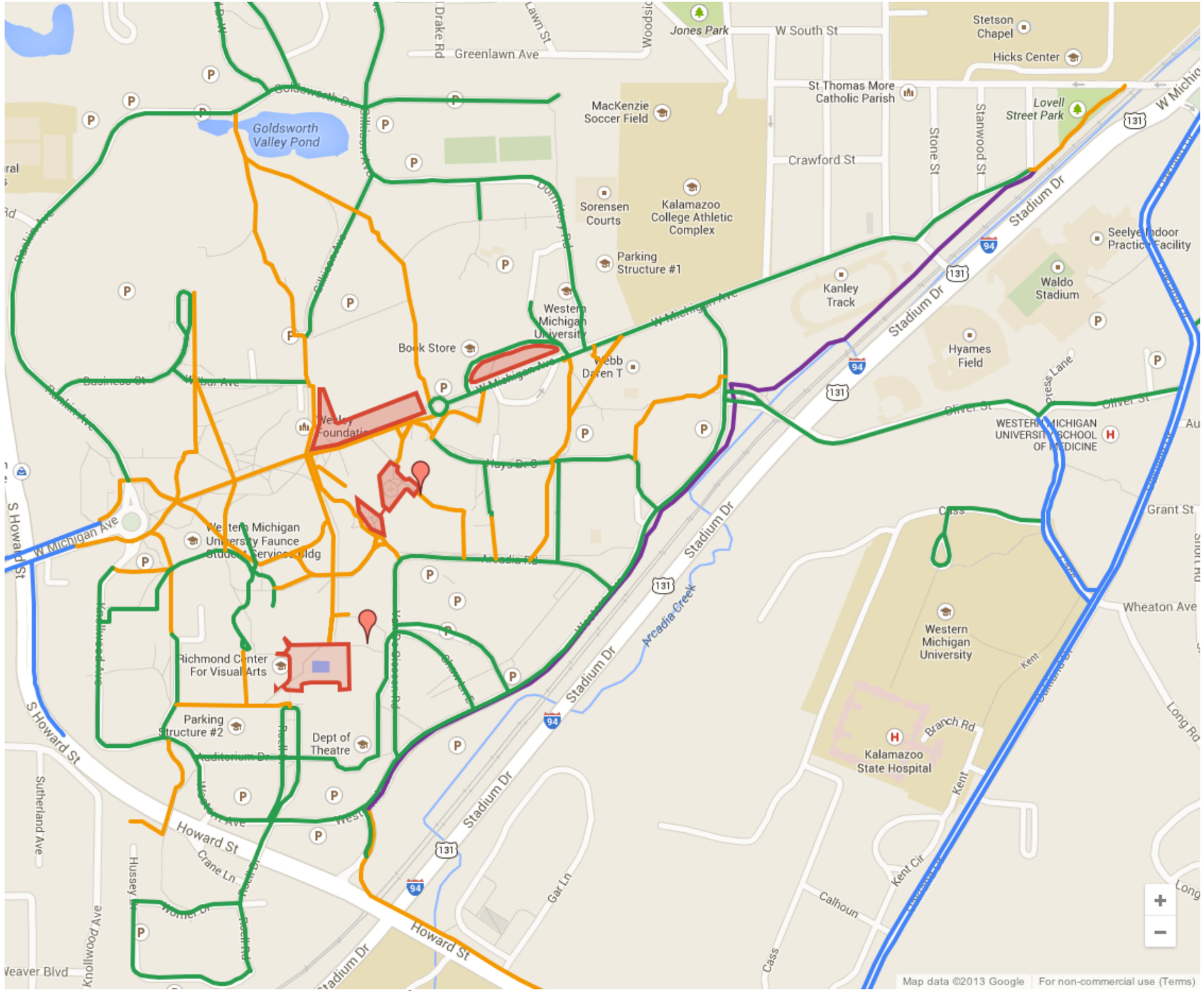

Figure 6: Pathway Map

Appendix 3: Reference List

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) manual 4th edition, 2012

Bike Frienly Universities Listing: BFU Master List, 2013
http://www.bikeleague.org/content/universities

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WMU Climate Action Plan, 2012
http://rs.acupcc.org/site_media/uploads/cap/1028-cap.pdf

Appendix 4: BFU Master List

Current Bicycle Friendly Universities
Spring 2013

Go to bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/ to learn more about these universities

College/ University Name	Award	Location	Spring 2013
Stanford University	Platinum	Stanford, CA	
Portland State University	Gold	Portland, OR	Moved Up
University of California	Gold	Davis, CA	
University of California	Gold	Santa Barbara, CA	
Boise State University	Silver	Boise, ID	
California State University	Silver	Long Beach, CA	
Colorado State University	Silver	Fort Collins, CO	
Georgia Institute of Technology	Silver	Atlanta, GA	
Harvard University	Silver	Cambridge, MA	New
Lincoln Memorial University	Silver	Harrogate, TN	New
Northern Arizona University	Silver	Flagstaff, AZ	
Oregon State University	Silver	Corvallis, OR	
University of Arizona	Silver	Tucson, AZ	
University of California	Silver	Irvine, CA	
University of California	Silver	Berkeley, CA	New
University of Maryland	Silver	College Park, MD	
University of Minnesota	Silver	Twin Cities, MN	
University of Nebraska	Silver	Lincoln, NE	New
University of Oregon	Silver	Eugene, OR	
University of Utah	Silver	Salt Lake City, UT	
University of Washington	Silver	Seattle, WA	
University of Wisconsin	Silver	Madison, WI	
Virginia Commonwealth University	Silver	Richmond, VA	
California Institute of Technology	Bronze	Pasadena, CA	New
Chatham University	Bronze	Pittsburgh, PA	
Clemson University	Bronze	Clemson, SC	New
Cornell University	Bronze	Ithaca, NY	
Duke University	Bronze	Durham, NC	
Eastern Mennonite University	Bronze	Harrisonburg, VA	
Emory University	Bronze	Atlanta, GA	

Appendix 4: BFU Master List

Current Bicycle Friendly Universities
Spring 2013

Go to bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/ to learn more about these universities

College/ University Name	Award	Location	Spring 2013
George Mason University	Bronze	Fairfax, VA	
Gustavus Adolphus College	Bronze	Saint Peter, MN	New
Indiana University	Bronze	Bloomington, IN	
James Madison University	Bronze	Harrisonburg, VA	New
Michigan State University	Bronze	East Lansing, MI	
Michigan Technological University	Bronze	Houghton, MI	New
New Mexico State University	Bronze	Las Cruces, NM	New
North Carolina State University	Bronze	Raleigh, NC	
Ohio State University	Bronze	Columbus, OH	
Old Dominion University	Bronze	Norfolk, VA	New
Pennsylvania State University	Bronze	University Park, PA	
Princeton University	Bronze	Princeton, NJ	
Rochester Institute of Technology	Bronze	Rochester, NY	
State University of New York	Bronze	Buffalo, NY	
University of California	Bronze	Los Angeles, CA	
University of Denver	Bronze	Denver, CO	
University of Illinois	Bronze	Champaign, IL	
University of Kentucky	Bronze	Lexington, KY	
University of Miami	Bronze	Coral Gables, FL	
University of Michigan	Bronze	Ann Arbor, MI	
University of Michigan	Bronze	Flint, MI	New
University of New England	Bronze	Biddeford, ME	New
University of North Carolina	Bronze	Greensboro, NC	
University of North Carolina	Bronze	Wilmington, NC	
University of South Carolina	Bronze	Columbia, SC	
University of Vermont	Bronze	Burlington, VT	
Virginia Tech	Bronze	Blacksburg, VA	New
Yale University	Bronze	New Haven, CT	

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