

Chapter Three-Existing Programs

Existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Education Programs:

Involvement of the ERPC MPO

As the transportation planning agency for the region ERPC MPO is tasked with supporting and promoting different modes of transportation. As a result, Erie County has been engaged in a number of activities focusing on bicycle and walking to benefit residents within the ERPC MPO planning area. Below is a listing of the activities undertaken in Erie County:

- **Active Transportation Month:** Since 2012 Active Transportation Month (ATM) has been facilitated by ERPC and the Office of Human Resources each year during the month of May. The program was created to encourage and educate the public to engage in more active means of transportation such as walking and bicycling instead of using motorized methods of transportation. The month of May was chosen since it is nationally designated as Bike Month. Each year's activities during the month vary and are announced through the ERPC MPO office. Community involvement supporting alternative transportation has been on the rise since the original establishment of the program and has expanded beyond just the month of May.



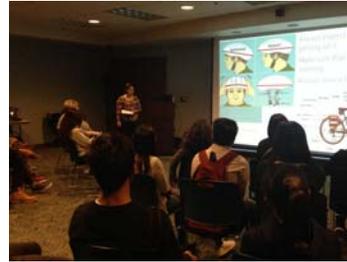
Active Transportation Month participant

- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee:** A Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) was formed as a recommendation from the 2013 Plan Update. The committee has been meeting quarterly since its inception. In addition to others who have shown interest, committee members have agreed to serve in a volunteer capacity as the steering committee and have assisted staff in many of the bicycle and pedestrian related programs.

- **Presentations:** Since Erie County is a tourist heavy area, many workers come during the tourist season to help keep up with the demand. Typically the spring and summer months have various waves of exchange students. Many of these students need some acclimation to American culture including travel behavior. In an effort to make the area safer, staff works with a local foreign exchange group, Alliance Abroad, to discuss walking and bicycling safety in the United States. Staff has also given various presentations to other groups as requested including preschool, Firelands BGSU Elder College classes, and the Erie County Annual County Wellness Luncheon in May.

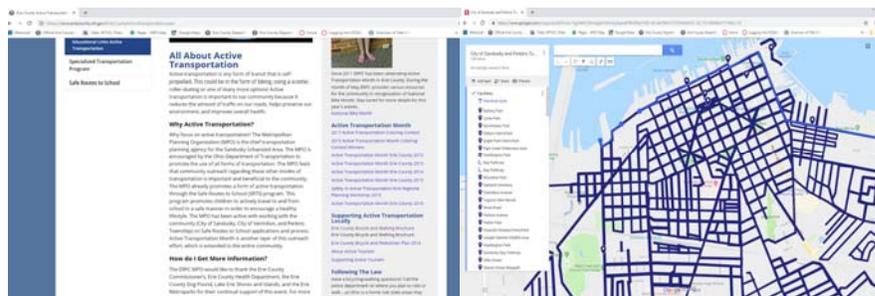


Staff at an outreach event



Staff during a safety seminar

- **Website:** A website has been dedicated to active transportation in Erie County under the ERPC MPO's main website. On the active transportation website there is the ability to locate areas that have bicycle and walking facilities. There also is a compilation of local bicycle and pedestrian related information and safety materials. The website address is <https://www.eriecounty.oh.gov/ErieCountyActiveTransportation.aspx>



ERPC MPO's Active Transportation website and interactive map

- **Social Media and Newsletters:** Staff also periodically posts information about bicycling and walking on the department's Facebook page and in the department's bi-annual reports. Social media efforts are used to exchange information and gather public input.



Snapshot of the ERPC MPO's Facebook Page

- **Educational materials:** Throughout the years staff has also brought in various speakers and workshops to the area. With the help of the bicycle and pedestrian committee, staff has created marketing brochures and presentations that can be utilized at the local level to promote bicycling and walking. This concept ties in with the website and social media efforts. The materials have been distributed county-wide to local agencies and jurisdictions to utilize as a tool. Staff has also compiled an online repository featuring transportation safety related website links and an in-office library which contains bicycling and walking related hard copy reports and documents open to the public during regular business hours.
- **Displays:** Educational display boards about walking and bicycling locally have been created and displayed at various events throughout the county over the years. The boards have been displayed at the Erie County Fair, Erie County Employee Health Fair and the Wightman Wieber Safety Kids Fest. In addition, staff compiles informational bags and handouts that are set out during displays and presentations.



Display boards at local events

- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Counts:** Periodically, staff and volunteers have participated in taking manual bicycle and pedestrian counts at high traffic areas/crash locations in the county. Counts have been conducted on US 250, near Mall Boulevard, Perkins Avenue, Bogart Road, and in the City of Sandusky at the intersection of Monroe Street and Central Avenue. The locations were determined by ERPC staff who utilized crash data reports from the Ohio Department of Public Safety. The data from these reports included recommendations on improving safety and it has been shared with both the local community and ODOT.



Bicycle riders on US 250 and an overview of Monroe Street counts location

Events

In addition to general education staff has also been instrumental in organizing local events and activities promoting bicycling and walking.

- **Bicycle Rodeo:** The region came together in 2016 in a joint effort to host a bicycle rodeo with local grant funding. Although it rained the day of the event there still was a large turnout of both participants and sponsors. Mini bicycle safety seminars were presented throughout the day and information was distributed at the Rodeo.
- A **Bicycle Rodeo kit** was created with some of the grant funds and is available to for the community to use free of charge. The kit has a guidebook on how to conduct a bicycle rodeo and contains the tools that would be needed for hosting an event such as cones, chalk and safety vests etc. The kit has been utilized by local jurisdictions (Village of Berlin Heights, Perkins Township) to conduct their own bike rodeos. Staff has assisted with these local bicycle rodeos as requested. Remaining local grant funds were used to purchase educational or bicycle/pedestrian related items for local jurisdiction's bicycle rodeos and for community events



Collage of pictures from the Bike Rodeo

- **Other Grants:** Staff has assisted in writing various grants to obtain bicycle and pedestrian safety materials for the residents of Erie County. Helmets were obtained through a grant awarded by the Ohio Pediatric Association's, "Put a Lid on it" Program. The helmets have been distributed by ERPC and other local agencies (Court Appointed Special Advocates Group, local schools, Perkins Township, Alliance Abroad Group, Erie Metro Parks, Erie County Health Department, and the City of Sandusky). Another local

grant was awarded in 2017 to obtain 500 safety vests distributed to the public through local agencies. These grants have truly been regional in success and in effort.



Safety vests distributed throughout the community

- **Bicycle Training:** In 2016 staff teamed up with ODOT and YAY! Bikes, a non-profit based out of Columbus, to offer an interactive hands on approach to local bicycle education. Locals joined staff from YAY! Bikes on a bike ride through the area giving them an in-field experience so local engineers, planners, politicians and others could see how their decisions on infrastructure impact users.



Pictures from the bicycle training workshop

Other Non-MPO Local Programs

- **Safety Town Programs:** In addition to these programs there also is some regional cooperative education conducted by the schools and safety officers.
 - Perkins Schools provides a Safety Town Program to children entering kindergarten at the elementary school. The program is available every summer and is presented by the school resource officer and the Perkins Police Department. The program is five days long and consists of bicycle and fire safety.
 - Vermilion Schools also provide a Safety Town Program that runs for two weeks in the summer. The program is administered by the Vermilion Police Department and it covers topics similar to the Perkins program. Sandusky Schools sponsor a Safety Program annually for pre-school students during eight days in the summer that lasts 2.5 hours each day. The program addresses travel safety and covers the rules of the road, traffic signs, walking and biking safety.

- The Village of Berlin Heights Police Department in conjunction with the Berlin Heights Kiwanis also hosts a Safety Town Program for students entering kindergarten in the summer at Edison Middle School. The program covers water, bicycle, playground, fire, bus and household safety. In addition, the children get to meet “safety friends” which includes an introduction to the local police, fire fighters and EMS operators.
- Margaretta Schools also hosts a Safety Town Program for elementary school children and has an additional bicycle education program for 2nd grade students.
- **Safe Routes to School Program:** Another multiple agency program is the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. The SRTS Program is a federal, state and local effort to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school. The program strives to make bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing. The program is run through the State of Ohio for students grades K-8. Upon request, the MPO staff assists local jurisdictions with program application and the creation of a School Travel Plan (STP).

Ohio requires communities to develop a STP before applying for program funding through the ODOT. The plan must also be ODOT approved before application for project funding can be submitted. Funding is available for both infrastructure and non-infrastructure activities. Local and regional governments, schools and community non-profit organizations ready, willing and able to implement SRTS initiatives are eligible to apply for funding. Funding is reimbursable and may be awarded at 100%. Successful SRTS programs include an integrated approach that addresses all five E’s of the program:

Engineering – Creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure within two miles of schools which include children in grades K-8, improvements will reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

Education – Teaching children and care givers about transportation choices, instructing them in life-long bicycling and walking safety skills, and launching driver safety campaigns.

Enforcement – Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are enforced in the vicinity of schools (this includes enforcement of speeds, yielding to pedestrians in crossings, and proper walking and bicycling behaviors), and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.

Encouragement – Using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling.

Evaluation – Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the intervention(s).



Bike Rodeo participant, 2016 SRTS infrastructure project in Vermilion



Perkins Bicycle Rodeo, 2018 (left) and Village of Milan Bike Rodeo, 2017 (right)

Below is a list of local funds from the program that have been awarded on the local level:

City of Vermilion-Improvements from the program have included sidewalk installations, flasher installation, crosswalks, signal improvements and pavement marking improvements along SR 60 and the Sailorway Drive (school campus) totaling approximately \$993,000.

Perkins Township-Sidewalks were installed along Strub Road near Furry elementary and middle school in 2017 for a total of approximately \$492,000. The township funded a bicycle rodeo was held in 2018.

City of Sandusky- The City of Sandusky was awarded funding to hire a consultant to assist in the completion of a school travel plan in 2013. Also in 2013/2014 approximately \$28,000 was awarded for non-infrastructure activities including a bicycle rodeo held in 2014.

Village of Milan- The Village of Milan hosted a bicycle rodeo in 2016 for and 2017 for an approximate total of \$2,566.

- **Erie Metro Parks Programs:** The Erie Metro Parks also has some walking education programs. The “Walk it Out”, program is dedicated to encouraging healthy physical activity in people of all ages to help reverse the nationwide epidemic of obesity and to improve the health and well-being of our country. Each walk is designed for participants to go on a walk and learn something along the way. Participants can “Walk it Out” with a Naturalist, fitness instructor or Police Officer, “Walk it Out” to a destination such as

the Sandusky City Greenhouse or Follett Museum, or “Walk it Out” around a destination such as Oakland Cemetery. In Erie County, the program is run by a joint partnership between Erie County Health Department and Erie Metro Parks. This collaborative effort began to encourage healthier choices within our community and in 2018 there was an average of 40 people in attendance. The program runs from May through August and consists of scheduled walks at various locations throughout the county.

- Erie Metro Parks and The Friends of Erie Metro Parks also host the “Go Take a Hike Program” which is designed to encourage the use of different hiking trails throughout the Metro Parks. The program runs from September through December. Participants (including dogs) record which trails they completed and then are eligible to receive prizes for participation.