



What's Important in a Bicycle-Friendly Community?

Report of a survey of residents and road users in Sumter County, South Carolina*

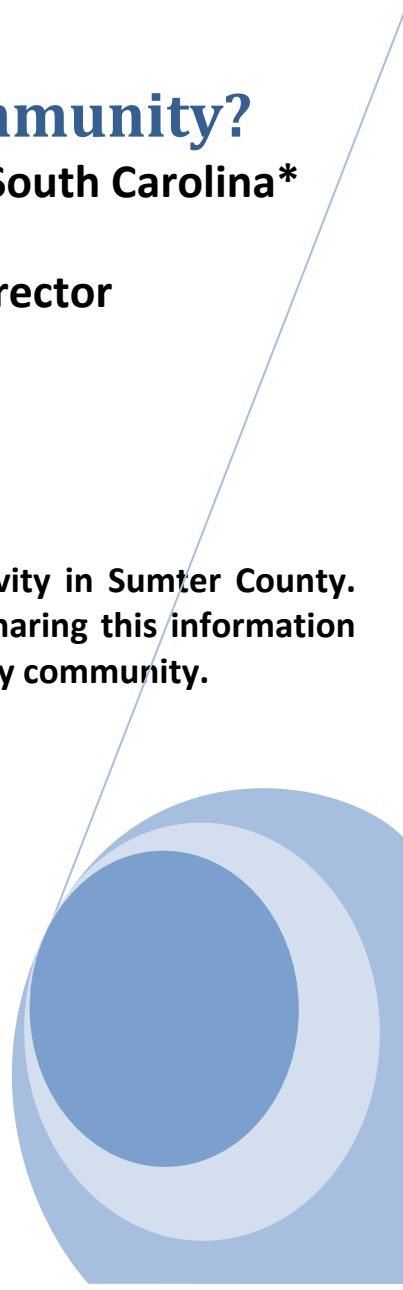
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Sumter County Active Lifestyles (SCAL)



Sumter County Active Lifestyles is a community organization promoting physical activity in Sumter County. Because bicycling is an important form of physical activity, our organization will be sharing this information with community groups and organizations who are advocating for a more bicycle-friendly community.

November 30, 2011

* Survey respondents were not randomly selected; therefore, the responses do not represent the views of the total population. Instead, they are the responses of people who are interested in the topic and chose to complete the survey.



Purpose of survey: To gather opinions about bicycling in Sumter County from residents and others who use the roads in the city and county. We want to know what bicycling issues are important to both cyclists and non-cyclists. The survey results will help determine how to improve cycling advocacy in Sumter County.

Who are we? Sumter County Active Lifestyles (SCAL) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt, community-based organization of local residents and representatives from city and county agencies, community groups, health care, education, the military, law enforcement and other nonprofit organizations— working to make it easier to be physically active in Sumter County. SCAL advocates for places to exercise, such as parks, trails, sidewalks and bicycle lanes, that are accessible for everyone. Bicycling is an important form of physical activity promoted by SCAL.

We are in partnership with the University of South Carolina Arnold School of Public Health Prevention Research Center (USC PRC) and Sumter County Recreation and Parks Department. This project was supported in part by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Grant No. 5U48DP001936-02. The contents of the publication are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Bicycling advocacy history- Traditionally, SCAL and our partners have sponsored National Bike to Work Day by organizing rides and placing ads in the local newspaper and other media outlets each May. We have initiated proclamations from Sumter’s mayor and Sumter County Council’s chairperson about National Bike Month in the City of Sumter and Sumter County.

In addition to bicycling promotions in May, other bicycling advocacy activities included:

- developing a bicycle master plan for the county
 - supporting Sumter Cycling, Hiking and Adventure Club
 - distributing bicycle taillights and bicycle safety bookmarks
 - developing a “Share the Road” educational video for motorists and cyclists
- <http://www.sumtercountyactivelifestyles.org/publications.php>

In 2007, a survey of motorists in Sumter County by the USC PRC showed that answers to questions about cycling laws were answered incorrectly from 10%-49% of the time.

SCAL, in collaboration with the USC PRC, surveyed cyclists in 2007. Fifty-five percent of those surveyed do not wear a bicycle helmet consistently when riding. Twenty-two percent said that they do nothing to make themselves more visible at night. The percentage of bicyclists who responded incorrectly to safety knowledge questions ranged from 23%-55%.

Since both motorists and cyclists frequently responded incorrectly to knowledge questions about cycling on the roadways, our survey was designed to determine if they had other commonalities and to see if both groups think education about sharing the road is needed. It was set up so that we could determine if a response came from a cyclist or non-cyclist. (Non-cyclists could be motorists or pedestrians.) The survey was administered May 3 – June 30, 2011. It was offered both as a paper copy and electronically. All respondents chose to answer it electronically.

In 2009, SCAL submitted an application to the League of American Bicyclists for the Bicycle Friendly Community award. On November 9, 2009, the league announced that Sumter County, South Carolina, received an honorable mention for the fall 2009 Bicycle Friendly Community review. In conjunction with the award, the League provided feedback regarding how to make our county more bicycle-friendly

Survey design- The survey framework was based on the BFC application. Based upon the application, the survey questions, summarized below, were:

- 1) People bicycle for many reasons. How important are they?
- 2) What facilities and amenities are important for supporting bicycling?
- 3) What roadway options/designs are important for safe cycling?
- 4) How important is motorists' education for safe cycling?
- 5) How important is cyclists' education for safe cycling?
- 6) What are the most important means of offering cycling education to children and youth?
- 7) What is most important if a university/college desires to be bicycle-friendly?
- 8) What is most important for businesses, corporations, organizations, associations, government agencies and others desiring to be bicycle-friendly?
- 9) What is the most important method of celebrating National Bike Month?

Respondents ranked the importance of all of the concepts in questions 1-9. The ranking choices were:

- very important
- important
- not important
- not applicable

All questions did not have to be answered. Space was provided for comments for each question.

Respondents provided personal data as follows:

- cyclist or non-cyclist; if a cyclist— where do they cycle?; if a non-cyclist—why do they choose not to cycle?
- gender and age

Thirty respondents gave their contact information and indicated a desire to be involved in bicycling advocacy efforts.

Target population- The survey’s target population was cyclists and non-cyclists who live or work in Sumter County. We especially wanted to include non-cyclists in an effort to find common ground between the two groups.

Methods used to solicit respondents included newspaper ads, direct email requests, Facebook and SCAL website posts with a direct link to the survey.

Survey respondents were not randomly selected; therefore, the responses do not represent the views of the total population. Instead, they are the responses of people who are interested in the topic and chose to complete the survey.

For more information, contact:

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What's Important in a Bicycle-Friendly Community? Summary of Survey Results

Characteristics of the survey respondents

Number of respondents:

Number of survey respondents
136

(Note that number of responses below and throughout the survey may not add up to 136, as some respondents did not answer all questions.)

Gender of respondents:

Percent female respondents	Percent male respondents
54.5%	45.5%

Cyclists/Non-cyclists:

Percent of respondents who answered, "Yes, I do bicycle."	Percent of respondents who answered, "No, I never bicycle."
74.8%	25.2%

Percentage of respondents by age

Age 18 -29	Age 30-39	Age 40-49	Age 50-59	Age 60 and above
6.7%	22.4%	26.1%	30.6%	14.2%

Summary of Results

The percentages in this summary of results and in the tables on pages 7-11 are the sums of the responses “very important” or “important.” The combination of the two results is referred to in this summary as “most important.”

Not shown are responses of “not important” and “not applicable.” The tables show responses from cyclists and non-cyclists.

Question #1- People bicycle for many reasons...- Cyclists most often selected recreation (100.0%) as the most important reason to bicycle and non-cyclists selected health (96.4%).

Question #2- Bicycling facilities and amenities...- Bicycle racks were selected as the most important amenity needed by cyclists (93%) and non-cyclists (88.3%).

Question #3- Roadways can accommodate bicycles in many ways...- Respondents rated five types of bicycle roadway accommodations. The top three accommodations selected as most important by cyclists and non-cyclists were bicycle lanes, shared-use paths and shared roadways. The responses ranged from 90.1% to 97.1%.

Question #4- Motorists Education...- Cyclists (94.0%) and non-cyclists (97.1%) agreed that motorists need more opportunities for education about cycling laws.

Question #5- Cyclists Education...- Both groups agreed that cyclists need more education about safe bicycling behaviors and about bicycling laws. The range of responses was from 94.0% to 97.0%.

Question #6- Bicycling and Youth Education...- Of four choices offered to respondents, Safe Routes to School was most often selected as an important opportunity for increasing knowledge about safe bicycling behavior and bicycling rules for youth (birth through high school age) — cyclists 99.0% and non-cyclists 97.0%.

Question #7- Bicycle-Friendly Universities/Colleges...- Secure and convenient bicycle parking was most often selected by both groups as the most important attribute at a bicycle-friendly school of higher education (99% cyclists, 97.1% non-cyclists).

Question #8- Bicycle-Friendly Businesses...- Both groups agreed that the most important attribute at a bicycle-friendly business is secure and convenient bicycle parking (96% cyclists, 91.2% non-cyclists).

Question #9- National Bike Month...- There were nine choices about how to celebrate National Bike Month. Cyclists (91.8%) most often selected “opportunities to participate in bicycle safety courses.” Non-cyclists made this selection (91.2%) and also selected “clean-ups (91.2%) at bicycle trails.”

Conclusion

The responses to survey questions indicate that both cyclists and non-cyclists share similar thoughts about bicycling. Based upon these commonalities, the dominant themes that have emerged are:

- **Safe and secure bicycle parking-** It is very important for bicycle racks to be available in public spaces. If a school of higher education or a business desire to be bicycle-friendly, bicycle racks are the most important attribute.
- **Roadways-** Having designated bike lanes, shared-use paths and shared roadways in Sumter County is important. Although important, there were numerous comments indicating that these accommodations need continued maintenance, and cyclists and non-cyclists need education about them. Otherwise, roadway accommodations can pose a safety hazard, especially when they contain debris.
- **Education-** Education about bicycling safety and laws pertaining to bicycling on the roadways is of high importance. This was especially evident in questions four, five and six. There were many comments throughout the survey about the need to provide education about bicycling safety for children.

Of the respondents who said that they do bicycle, the majority of their cycling is within Sumter County. Respondents who said they never bicycle (48.9%) said it is because they do not have a place to bicycle safely.

Survey respondents gave many comments and suggestions. Thirty respondents (22%) provided their names and contact information and indicated that they would like to be involved in activities to promote Sumter County as a bicycle-friendly community. It appears that there are enough people sharing similar concerns to move forward with further bike advocacy efforts.

Results Tables

Questions #1-9

Q #1- People bicycle for many reasons. Please indicate how important these reasons are to you. Response choices were: Very Important, Important, Not Important, Not Applicable.		
	Cyclists	Non-cyclists
	% Very Important or Important	% Very Important or Important
Bicycling for transportation	65.7	64.7
Bicycling for health	96.1	96.4
Bicycling for recreation	100	91.2
Bicycling to preserve and protect the environment	81.4	84.9

Q #2- BICYCLING FACILITIES/AMENITIES- Please indicate how important these facilities/amenities are to you. Response choices were: Very Important, Important, Not Important, Not Applicable.		
	Cyclists	Non-cyclists
	% Very Important or Important	% Very Important or Important
Designated bicycle parking spaces on city streets (similar to parking spaces for cars)	75.3	79.4
Bicycle depots/stations- transportation centers that offer safe bicycle parking and services such as bicycle rentals, access to public transportation, lockers and other amenities	71.3	67.7
Bicycle racks at businesses	93.0	88.3

Q #3- Roadways can accommodate bicycles in many ways. Please review each roadway option and indicate its importance to you.

Response choices were: Very Important, Important, Not important, Not Applicable.

	Cyclists	Non-cyclists
	% Very Important or Important	% Very Important or Important
Bicycle lanes- a portion of roadway designated by pavement stripes and markings and/or signs showing that the lanes are only for the use of bicyclists	97.1	94.1
Shared-use paths- a bikeway separated from motorized vehicular traffic. Shared-use paths may also be used by pedestrians, wheelchair users and others.	95.8	97.0
Shared roadway (Share the Road)- roadways with signs alerting all roadway users that bicyclists are likely to be on the road	90.1	90.9
Bicycle boulevards- low-traffic neighborhood streets with features such as low speed limits and stop signs turned toward motorists to keep bicyclists moving	78.5	75.7
Road diets- a reduction in the number of lanes for motorized vehicles. A four-lane road may be changed to a three-lane road. Two of the lanes are for motorized vehicles and the third lane is for non-motorized traffic.	63.9	60.6

Q#4- MOTORIST EDUCATION- A survey by the University of South Carolina Prevention Research Laboratory in 2007 showed that 10%-49% of motorists responded incorrectly to questions about cycling laws. Please indicate how important it is for motorists to have increased opportunities for education about cycling laws.

Response choices were: Very Important, Important, Not Important, Not Applicable.

	Cyclists	Non-cyclists
	% Very Important or Important	% Very Important or Important
Motorists need more opportunities to become better educated about cycling laws.	94.0	97.1

Q #5 CYCLISTS EDUCATION. Sumter County Active Lifestyles and the University of South Carolina Arnold School of Public Health Prevention Research Center collaborated in 2007 to survey Sumter cyclists. Included in the survey were questions about bicycling behavior and knowledge of bicycling laws. Fifty-five (55%) of those surveyed do not wear a bicycle helmet consistently when riding. Twenty-two percent (22%) said that they do nothing to make themselves more visible at night. The percentage of bicyclists who responded incorrectly to safety knowledge questions ranged from 23%-55%. Please indicate how important it is for cyclists to have increased opportunities for education about safe bicycling behavior and bicycling laws. Response choices were: Very Important, Important, Not important, Not Applicable.

	Cyclists	Non-cyclists
	% Very important or Important	% Very Important or Important
Bicyclists need more education about safe bicycling behaviors.	94.0	97.0
Bicyclists need more education about bicycling laws.	95.8	96.9

Q #6- BICYCLING AND YOUTH EDUCATION (birth through high school age)- A bicycle-friendly community may offer opportunities for children and youth to increase their knowledge of safe bicycling behavior and bicycling rules. There are many ways to do this. Please review each of these options and place a check mark on its importance.

Response choices were: Very Important, Important, Not important, Not Applicable.

	Cyclists	Non-cyclists
	% Very important or Important	% Very Important or Important
Safe Routes to School (SRTS)- a national and international movement to create safe, convenient, and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and from schools	99.0	97.0
Bicycle clubs in schools that emphasize how to ride for fun and safety	91.0	88.2
Bicycle clubs in churches that emphasize how to ride for fun and safety	83.9	72.7
Bicycle clubs in the community that emphasize how to ride for fun and safety	93.0	93.8

Q #7- BICYCLE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITIES/COLLEGES- schools of higher education that promote bicycling for transportation, recreation, exercise, leisure, environmental protection and other. Listed are some elements of a bicycle-friendly university/ college. Please indicate the importance of each of the following components of a bicycle-friendly university/college. Please place a check mark in each row.
 Response choices were: Very Important, Important, Not important, Not Applicable.

	Cyclists	Non-cyclists
	% Very important or Important	% Very Important or Important
Secure and convenient bicycle parking for students, faculty, staff and visitors	99.0	97.1
Showers and changing facilities on site for students, faculty and staff	74.0	64.7
Incentives for students and employees to commute to and from the school by bicycle	77.0	75.7
Bicycling safety and education classes for students and employees	88.0	94.2
Bicycling clubs	78.8	75.7
Bicycling advisory group	69.4	71.0

Q #8- BICYCLE-FRIENDLY BUSINESSES- businesses, corporations, organizations, associations, government agencies, and others that actively promote bicycling for transportation, recreation, exercise, leisure environmental protection and other. At a bicycle-friendly business, how important are the following items?
 Response choices were: Very Important, Important, Not Important, Not Applicable.

	Cyclists	Non-cyclists
	% Very Important or Important	% Very Important or Important
Secure and convenient bicycle parking for employees, customers and clients	96.0	91.2
Showers and locker room facilities for employees	71.4	66.7
Incentives for employees to commute to and from work by bicycle	80.8	73.5
Bicycling safety and education classes for employees	79.6	79.4

Q #9- NATIONAL BIKE MONTH- The month of May is a time to celebrate the bicycle and its contributions. During this month, activities may include events listed below. For SUMTER COUNTY, how important are the following?

Response choices were: Very Important, Important, Not important, Not Applicable.

	Cyclists	Non-cyclists
	% Very important or Important	% Very Important or Important
Family bike ride day(s)	90.8	78.7
Designated day(s) for commuting to and from work by bicycle	79.5	67.6
Opportunities to participate in bicycle safety courses	91.8	91.2
Bicycle ride(s) for charity	85.9	88.5
Clean-ups at bicycle trails	90.9	91.2
Bicycle rodeo(s) (a fun and safety bicycle activity for children)	79.4	85.3
Bicycling with the mayor	51.6	44.1
Bicycling with a celebrity	46.9	44.1
Breakfast or energizer rally- For example, local restaurants provide breakfast for customers arriving by bicycle.	75.3	66.6