

FIX BARRIERS

**Winner!****Myrtle Beach, South Carolina**

One of the challenges Myrtle Beach, SC, faces as a tourist destination that swells from 30,000 to 450,000 residents is the need to accommodate a variety of users, including motor vehicles, mopeds, buses, bicycles, golf carts, and pedestrians. Through participation in the Mayors' Challenge, the city evaluated safety for its bicyclists and pedestrians by conducting bicycle safety and walkability audits. The city will use the recommendations resulting from these audits as it moves forward with plans to enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

Demonstrated Successes

During the Mayors' Challenge, Myrtle Beach staff focused on finding creative and innovative methods for overcoming the unique challenge of accommodating so many different road users during peak vacation season. Due to city efforts, the city won the Fix Barriers award for reducing barriers to pedestrian and bicycle access throughout the city's street network. In addition, the city staff won the Mayors' Challenge Engagement Award by using many USDOT resources to achieve their goals.

Fix Barriers

Myrtle Beach is taking multiple steps to holistically consider ways to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety by fixing barriers. Myrtle Beach staff used the resources provided by USDOT to successfully consider ways to make their roadways safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, and they were creative in identifying funding sources to support their efforts. Drawing on these resources, the City drafted and adopted its first Complete Streets policy, conducted a bicycle safety audit in the downtown core with assistance from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and conducted a walkability audit using grant funds from the National Association of Realtors obtained by the Coastal Carolinas Association of Realtors.

One key activity was conducting bicycle safety and walkability audits to identify safety concerns and develop strategies for creative and inexpensive solutions in the short term. The city has also taken steps to identify gaps in the sidewalk network and institutionalize better planning for pedestrians and bicyclists by adopting a Complete Streets policy.



Participants engaged in the bicycle safety audit.

Bicycle Safety Audit Leads to Better Bicycle Lanes and Signage

Myrtle Beach received assistance from FHWA to conduct a bicycle safety audit on a highly congested section of Ocean Boulevard in the downtown core. The audit, which was informed by an analysis of data on traffic counts and crashes, produced short- and long-term recommendations. Based on the recommendations, the City has already implemented improvements, such as:

- Installation of signage at gaps in the bicycle lanes to alert drivers and bicyclists that the bicycle lane is beginning or ending;
- Pavement repairs to bicycle lanes; and
- Allocation of funds for painting arrows to guide bicyclists in the appropriate travel direction.

In fact, the value of the Bicycle Safety Audit has prompted its use as a model for additional corridors.

Walkability Audit Identifies Potential Low-Cost Options for Improving Pedestrian Safety

Expert Dan Burden led a walkability audit for the city along King's Highway, with 30 participants including Mayor John Rhodes and the City Manager, John Pederson. The group made observations from the pedestrian perspective and brainstormed creative and inexpensive solutions for the corridor. The audit findings should be available soon and will be used to develop recommendations. Recommendations may include the use of mini-circles on low-speed crossroads leading to Kings Highway to improve bicycle flow, painting "walk lanes" as the city is not able to build sidewalks, and moving utility boxes out of sidewalk pathways.

Completed Sidewalk Network Map Identifies Gaps

While gathering data in anticipation of the two audits, the city discovered that it had incomplete



Participants discussing curb ramps and ADA accessibility during the Myrtle Beach walkability audit.

information about its sidewalk infrastructure. Recognizing the importance of that information, volunteers on the city's Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Committee took to the streets, mapping and measuring every sidewalk. Now the Public Works Department has a complete inventory that it has committed to updating periodically, and the Committee has a map with clear indications of sidewalk connectivity gaps.

Complete Streets Policy

Myrtle Beach adopted its first Complete Streets Policy in June 2015. This policy was informed by open dialogue and coordination among the Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Committee, the Public Works Department, and the Planning Commission. Since its adoption, staff consider the policy in all major subdivision reviews and on every road maintenance project design. For example, parts of Ocean Boulevard have been enhanced by:

- Reducing four lanes of traffic to three lanes;
- Installing protective landscaped medians designed as refuge areas for pedestrians crossing at new high-visibility crosswalks; and
- Adding bicycle lanes to both sides of Ocean Boulevard.

Engagement

During the challenge, the city embraced and participated enthusiastically in the Mayors' Challenge activities. The city sent representatives to the first Mayors' Summit for Safer People and Safer Streets in March 2015; the Summit engaged representatives from over 160 communities from 44 states to learn about improving safety. During the Summit, DOT staff shared resources and tools to assist teams as they pursued the challenge goals. After their participation at the Summit, the city staff continued to work closely with the

USDOT staff to ensure success. Myrtle Beach staff participated in seven meetings, events, and webinars to learn from peers and experts with practical experience about bicycle and pedestrian safety. Through the city's collective efforts engaging in the Mayors' challenge activities, they have been awarded the Mayors' Challenge Engagement Award.

Next Steps

The city plans to continue its enhancements to Ocean Boulevard through the transformation of roadway sections to accommodate bicycle lanes, new sidewalks, and high-visibility crosswalks (e.g., vertical striping, reflective markings, advance darts). In response to the Bicycle Safety Audit, the Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Committee is in the process of evaluating and prioritizing long-term recommendations.

"With our millions of visitors and growing population we have a dynamic transportation environment. The Mayors' Challenge has helped us focus on safety for all users, whether you're cycling, walking, or driving."

Mayor John T. Rhodes
