

2nd Street Cycle Track Upgrade Narrative

The City of La Crosse is working to meet Wisconsin's Carbon Reduction Strategy by reducing singular occupant vehicle trips. One strategy to reach this target is to update the 2nd Street Cycle Track. As it stands, the cycle track is a dedicated bicycle facility stretching from Market Street to La Crosse Street with green pavement markings and sharrow buffers at all intersections and collapsible bollard posts installed as a buffer. The upgrade to the 2nd Street Cycle Track will increase mobility, enhance user safety and confidence, produce less conflict, cultivate greater use, and reduce carbon emissions. Upgrades to the cycle track will include: 1) Concrete median with signs near intersections further indicating the cycle track versus driving lanes with bollards attached periodically; 2) Bollards at all entrances for a physical barrier to prevent cars from driving down the cycle track; 3) Additional stop signs in areas with previous confusion.

The City of La Crosse's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan was first adopted in 2012 and another update will soon be completed in 2024. Plans have continually updated best practices in planning, design, and education for the thousands of commuters and recreational users. Research and conversations throughout the update of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan led to a conclusion that protected bikeways are a model for future bicycle infrastructure in the city. The addition of bicycle infrastructure on 2nd Street was first introduced as an idea in the 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. The project idea was further developed in the 2021 Downtown Master Plan with the suggestion of a protected two-way cycle track. The desire from the community is for the bicycle network to serve all ages and abilities and by upgrading this infrastructure we can pave the way for more cyclists and more opportunities. During the 2024 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan update, we received the following comments during the public engagement process:

"I often see delivery trucks parked in the new bike lanes on 2nd Street. This is not safe for bike riders."

"Every time I have biked in this new 2-way bike lane there has been a parked car. A vehicle almost hit me in the lane as well when he was driving in the bike lane."

"Plastic sticks do not count as a protected bike lane."

"Bike lanes need physical protection from cars. Northbound bike traffic is literally one foot from southbound auto traffic."

“Thank you for bike lanes on 2nd Street, it’s much safer now. Replace the bollards with a curb.”

“2nd Street north-bound cycle path cannot see stop signs, because they are across two traffic lanes plus parking.”

In one year, the city has observed growing numbers of regular usage among cyclists. However, the safety aspect needs to be improved to create better opportunities for cyclists of all ages. According to the La Crosse Climate Action Survey, over 65% of respondents indicated they would walk or bike more frequently if they felt safer. With safer infrastructure, people will feel more comfortable transitioning from driving to biking and this upgrade will provide that opportunity right in downtown La Crosse.

The City’s Climate Action Plan (CAP) has multiple actions related to bicycle education, infrastructure, and incentives. The CAP greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction goal is to reduce community wide GHG emissions by 40% to 50% below 2019 levels by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. A strategy expressed in the CAP for achieving this goal is to improve the comfort and safety of walking and biking within La Crosse. Increasing opportunities for and safety of biking and walking routes for all users can support reduced vehicle use by replacing those trips with other types of transportation.

Timeline

The 2nd Street Cycle Track upgrade is an important safety improvement that can be implemented in one year.

Grant Award to Contract	One to two months
Project Design Planning/State Review	Three to four months
Project Bid and Award	Three months
Construction	One to two months
Punchlist/Grand opening	One month

We don’t anticipate problems or obstacles to project implementation. Grant funds will assist in addressing comments made during the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan to make this infrastructure useable and safe for new and experienced cyclists alike. The 20% project match (\$81,697) will be requested from the City’s Capital Improvement Plan. Cost effective benefits to the public include a less expensive way to travel for commuter trips.

Connectivity: La Crosse has 13.15 miles of on-street bike facilities, 4.38 miles of on-street side paths, and 11.65 miles of paved paths. The project directly connects to Swift Creek Trail (Isle la Plume) and the Marsh Trails. From the Marsh Trail, users can easily connect to La Crosse River and Great River State Trails. These connections provide effortless access to many employers downtown such as La Crosse Distilling Company, the La Crosse Center, Holiday Inn & Suites, and more. Additionally, the 2nd Street Cycle Track assists in a connection to one of La Crosse’s major employers, Gundersen Hospital, with over 1000 employees.

Project Success: To ensure project success, the city will communicate the project’s purpose and any closures or detours during construction. Communication will be on the website, social media, and with businesses along 2nd Street. Project success will be measured by increased use and achievement of requested improvements.

Project Benefits: We have identified four quantitative ways to evaluate the project.

- 1) We estimate 175 daily bike commuters (based on AADT and US Census commuter data) using the existing lane. Assuming the average bike commute is two miles, the average annual vehicle miles currently saved is 1,000 per commuter (2 miles one way x 2 trips per day x 5 days per week x 50 weeks annually).
- 2) According to US Department of Transportation data, the average fuel mileage for light duty vehicles is 22.8 MPG. The average fuel saved per La Crosse bike commuter is 43 gallons annually (1,000 / 22.8).
- 3) According to the US EPA, a gallon of gasoline produces 0.00878 Metric Tons of GHG emissions.¹ The average GHG emissions avoided per La Crosse bike commuter is 0.4 Metric Tons annually (43 x 0.00878)
- 4) According to “Lessons from the Green Lanes: Evaluating Protected Bike Lanes in the U.S.” a study from Portland State University, the average protected bike lane sees bike counts increase 75% in its first year alone.² Based on this projection, the project should result in a reduction of at least 122 metric tons of GHG emissions annually (0.4 metric tons x 175 existing commuters x 75% increase). Over the project lifespan, the project should result in a reduction of at least 2,440 metric tons of GHG emissions (122 metric tons annually x 20-year project design lifespan).

¹ https://www.eia.gov/environment/emissions/co2_vol_mass.php

² https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1143&context=cengin_fac