



By: *Gordon Feller*

# Biking Is (Finally) Having A Moment



Transport is, by far, the largest generator of the world's daily dose of greenhouse gas emissions. The cleanest and greenest mode of transport, by far, is the bicycle.

But cyclists represent only 1% of daily traffic in the USA. There is much more of a cycling culture in the EU: for example, nearly 30% of all employees commute to work by bicycle in The Netherlands.

Does the US federal government have plans to expand bicycle infrastructure in cities? How has the Biden Administration focused in on cycling as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

The US has recognized the importance of expanding bicycle infrastructure in cities as a means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote sustainable transportation.

The Biden Administration has taken some bold and unprecedented steps to **address** this issue – and they've used various kinds of initiatives and funding programs.

## Expanding Bicycle Infrastructure

The Biden Administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), **signed** in November 2022, allocates \$1.2 billion for the construction of safe and connected bicycle infrastructure across the US.

This funding aims to create a national network of cycling routes, including protected bike lanes, trails, and other facilities that encourage more people to choose biking as a mode of transportation.

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Additionally, the Great Bike Infrastructure Project (GBIP), **launched** by PeopleForBikes in 2023, is an ambitious program that aims to transform communities by advancing pro-bike policies and thousands of bike infrastructure projects in all 50 states.

This initiative includes a national database of over 1,000 bicycle infrastructure projects, as well as a legislative guide to assist policymakers and advocates in expanding bike infrastructure.

## Addressing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The expansion of bicycle infrastructure is directly linked to the Administration's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector.

By providing safe and convenient cycling options, the goal is to encourage more people to choose biking over driving, thereby reducing vehicle miles traveled and associated emissions.

The U.S. federal government's Department of Transportation's strategy to "Expand and Improve Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure" highlights the potential health benefits of this approach, including increased physical activity, improved air quality, and reduced exposure to transportation-related emissions.

The strategy emphasizes the importance of creating a network of bicycle lanes, trails, and other infrastructure to make cycling a viable and attractive transportation option.

## Addressing Habits and Infrastructure Challenges

Both habits and lack of infrastructure have been identified as barriers to increasing bicycle usage in the US. The dominance of car-centric transportation habits and the perception of cycling as unsafe or

inconvenient have contributed to low adoption rates in many cities.

To address these challenges, the GBIP legislative guide outlines strategies such as mandating Complete Streets policies, which ensure that all road users, including cyclists, have safe and accessible ways to travel.

The guide also emphasizes the importance of creating safer places to ride by reducing traffic speeds, banning right turns on red, and adopting modern design standards.

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Furthermore, initiatives like The Final Mile project have demonstrated that a robust bike network can be built in as little as 24 months through collaborative efforts involving city officials, elected leaders, business owners, and community organisations.

By engaging diverse stakeholders and addressing concerns, these projects aim to shift habits and perceptions towards cycling as a viable and desirable mode of transportation.

Not all of the most interesting actions and programs are to be found at the Federal level. Here are some notable initiatives to expand bicycle infrastructure in five larger U.S. states:

#### California

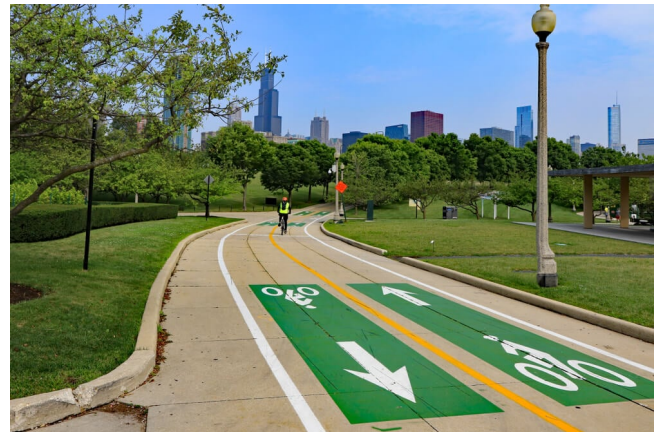
California's government has been busy with biking programs for 25 years. The state government has recently allocated \$1 billion, for spending over the next decade, for its Active Transportation Program, which funds projects like new bike lanes, trails, and pedestrian improvements.

Major cities like Los Angeles have adopted mobility plans to build out connected networks of protected bike lanes and neighborhood greenways.

#### Texas

The Texas Department of Transportation has developed a Bicycle Mobility Plan that aims to make bicycling an integral part of the state's transportation system.

Cities like Austin have rapidly expanded their urban trail networks and protected bike lane mileage through initiatives like The Final Mile project.



*Chicago has accelerated its bike lane installation in recent years, including building out over 100 miles of neighborhood greenway routes*

#### Florida

The SunTrail **program** is Florida's expanding network of paved multi-use trails for bicyclists and pedestrians, with over 8,000 miles planned across the state. Major cities like Miami have also implemented protected bike lane and neighborhood greenway projects.

#### Illinois

The Illinois Department of Transportation oversees the state's bike transportation policies and has developed design guides for bike facilities.

Chicago has accelerated its bike lane installation in recent years, including building out over 100 miles of neighborhood greenway routes.

#### Pennsylvania

Through **programs** like SmartTransportation and WalkWorks, Pennsylvania has funded

hundreds of miles of new bike lanes and multi-use trails across the state. Pittsburgh completed 50 new miles of connected bike routes in just 24 months as part of The Final Mile project.

These state-level initiatives, coupled with local efforts in major cities, demonstrate a growing commitment to expanding safe and connected bicycle infrastructure networks across larger U.S. states.

Sustained funding, policy support, and collaborative community engagement have been key drivers of this infrastructure expansion.

The US federal government, plus some of the most creative state governments, have come to recognize the importance of expanding bicycle infrastructure in cities as a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote sustainable transportation.

Through initiatives like the BPIL, the GBIP, and collaborative efforts with local communities, the Administration is taking steps to address both infrastructure gaps and habitual barriers to cycling adoption.

However, sustained efforts and continued investment will be necessary to create a truly comprehensive and connected network of bicycle infrastructure across the country.