Why a Bike-Ped Friendly Delray is a Better Delray

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About Human Powered Delray

Human Powered Delray (HPD) is a volunteer organization of active Delray Beach citizens committed to making Delray Beach a more walkable and bikeable city. Delray Beach is well-known for its artful blend of two main attractions: a beautiful beach and a charming, walkable downtown strip - think "Key West meets Manhattan." But Delray Beach is so much more! This unique "Village by the Sea" stretches out north, south, and west. And it requires many more sidewalks to connect residential neighborhoods with the great shopping, restaurants, services, schools - and beach. More and safer sidewalks and protected bike lanes would allow more students to bike and walk to school; enable more workers to walk and bike to work; and tourists and visitors would have more convenient access to shopping, restaurants, and other points of interest.

Human Powered Delray is committed to adding more strategically placed sidewalks and protected bike lanes all over the city. We are encouraging a shift from total reliance on automobiles to greater use of bicycles and walking for local transportation. A number of cities in America have already achieved great success in this transition - with more cities joining the ranks each year. With traffic congestion reaching critical (and very frustrating) levels, it is high time to get to work on multi-modal transportation options for Delray Beach.

HPD has three specific goals for roadways and bicycle/pedestrian lanes:

1. Rehabilitate the alleys in Delray Beach in a systematic way to make them more attractive, bikeable, and walkable (aka “Alley Activation”).

2. Develop cycle tracks (protected bike lanes) that would significantly increase clean, quiet bicycle traffic in Delray Beach. Cycle tracks provide a physical barrier between bicycles and cars.
3. Increase and connect the sidewalks of Delray Beach so that residents and visitors young and old have options (other than driving a car) to get around town safely and conveniently.

**Why Human Powered Delray and Why Now?**

Cities that invest in biking and pedestrian infrastructure quickly become magnets that attract people looking for “high quality of life” places to live.

City leaders are discovering that building world-class bicycle and pedestrian transportation networks is a cost-effective and efficient way to move more people in the same amount of space. In addition to the normal traffic congestion, there is currently significant construction in progress between Atlantic Avenue and Linton Boulevard in downtown Delray and other major projects underway in West Delray. These projects only make the daily traffic congestion more frustrating - reminding us that it is time to begin to reduce our dependency on cars before things get even worse.

When we recognize that just under 50% of all auto trips in America are four miles or less, it is clear than an alternative transportation solution would easily work. With these relatively short distances, many people could conveniently bike or walk instead of drive a car - but only if safe, attractive bike and pedestrian routes were readily available.

**Alley Activation in Delray**

Alleys have recently been lauded by New Urbanists for their ability to reinvigorate pedestrian and bicycle activity in both downtowns and residential neighborhoods. Alley activation is a community enrichment strategy gaining momentum in cities all over America. As downtowns become population magnets, we see urban dwellers from retirees to Gen Xers gravitating toward bikeable and walkable cities with less automobile traffic. Delray is a city that is rich in alleyways, but many of them have been neglected and underutilized. Many are overgrown with weeds, have been dumping grounds for garbage, or suffer from illegal encroachment of buildings.
The word "alley" is more than 600 years old and comes from the French word *alee* which means "walking" or "passage." Alleys are ideal for walking or biking. To reclaim the alleys will take the combined efforts of the city and neighborhood residents who actually own these alleyways. HPD has developed a Master Plan to reclaim the alleys for foot and bicycle traffic. While some of our alleys are paved, most remain unsurfaced. Re-envisioned, rebuilt alleys can facilitate urban runoff management through infiltration, groundwater recharge, heat island reduction, and native plantings. And because Delray Beach has a long heritage of resident artists, alley activation might encourage artists to incorporate their paintings and sculptures into the alley revitalization and beautification efforts.

Conceptualizing alleys as green infrastructure represents a new vision for an old design feature. Researchers have demonstrated that redesigned alleys can provide valuable services such as park and recreational space, increased property values, and links that improve mobility within the community. As safe, attractive, usable social spaces, improved alleys help renew neighborhoods by fostering increased visibility and use of previously feared spaces.

**Won't More Sidewalks and Protected Bike Lanes Slow Traffic?**

Many expect that bike lanes will be built at the expense of auto traffic. However, a 2014 report found that there was no appreciable loss of motor vehicle commute capacity on streets where protected bike lanes or cycle tracks were installed. While the bike lanes did not cause traffic congestion, cities that added cycle tracks (protective bike lanes) saw bike traffic grow substantially.

In fact, bike networks can help relieve pressure on the “traditional” street system. By making biking safe and pleasant for a broader range of people, bike lanes are bringing more residents, commuters and shoppers to neighborhoods without bogging down streets with traffic congestion. And by reducing the pressure of excessive automobile traffic, the street system is better able to handle buses, freight and more essential car trips.

**What Are Cycle Tracks and Why Are They Important?**

Bicycling network infrastructure can come in two forms: bike lanes and cycle tracks. HPD is committed to building cycle tracks in Delray Beach. Here’s why:

While a bike lane is a designated lane on the pavement adjacent to motorized traffic with *no physical barrier* between cars and bicycles or pedestrians, a cycle track is a much safer bike route that does place a physical barrier between itself and automobile traffic. Studies show that 61 percent of people who do not bike said they would be more likely to consider biking if there were *protected* bike lanes. The
barrier can be a curb, a swale, plastic planters, flex posts, a fence, a parking lane or other types of barrier. Bollards, parked cars, and raised concrete curbs can also be used to separate bikes from cars. Flex posts have the advantage of being inexpensive barriers that keep cars and bicycles separated without damage to cars, should they brush up against them.

Cycle tracks are usually between 5 feet to 8 feet in width.

Over 95 percent of cyclists say they feel safer riding in a protected bike lane.

In its first year alone, a protected bike lane increases bike traffic on a typical street by an average of 72 percent. With the addition of protected bike lanes, both traffic accidents and traffic injuries went down.

Since 2011, the number of miles of protected bike lanes in the United States has more than doubled.

Cities that added protective bike lanes saw bike traffic increase dramatically, for example:

- Buffered bike lanes on Spruce and Pine Streets in Philadelphia – up 266%
- Buffered median bike lanes in Washington, DC on Pennsylvania Ave. – up 200%
- Protected bike lane on Prospect Park West in NYC – up 190%
- Protected bike lane on Market St. in San Francisco – up 115%

What Are the Economic Benefits of Cycle Tracks for the Workforce?

Companies and cities are scrambling to attract talented creative residents who increasingly prefer downtown jobs and nearby residences. As center-city populations grow, motor vehicle congestion increases. New roads are rarely an option in mature cities like Delray Beach. Protected bike lanes have the advantage of bringing predictability to streets and providing multi-modal transportation choices while creating attractive, compelling neighborhoods.
By extending the geographic range of travel, bike lanes help neighborhoods redevelop much faster without having to wait years for new transit service or roadways to be approved, funded, and built. In a 2002 survey of recent homebuyers sponsored by the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Home Builders, bicycle and pedestrian trails ranked as the second most important community amenity out of a total of 18 choices.

Young educated workers, Millennials and members of Generation X, increasingly prefer downtown jobs and lifestyles, free of dependence on cars. They are driving less and favor cycling or public transit over private cars. Because protected bike lanes make biking more comfortable, safe, and popular, bike routes help companies set up shop downtown without breaking the bank on auto parking spaces. And they allow workers to reach their desks the way they increasingly prefer - under their own power. Both popular media and scientific studies affirm: “Build it and they will come.”

To appeal to today's highly-skilled post-Gen-Y workforce, employers are relocating themselves within the downtowns and city centers that their recruits prefer. Both companies and cities benefit from accommodating the urban preferences of their highly valued workers. They become more competitive and increase employee loyalty and productivity.

Biking has great economic benefits for towns that invest in non-motorized mobility.

Studies by Rutgers University, University of California Davis, University of Minnesota, University of Colorado, University of Michigan, the National Bicycle Tour Directors Association, Local Government Commission and numerous state Departments of Transportation all echo these basic findings: bicyclists riding through town stop and spend money.

**Bike Shopping: Shorter Trips, More Visits**

Bike lanes are not only good for the health of the cyclists and for alleviating traffic congestion, they are also good for the profitability of local businesses and for the home prices of residences within easy reach of cycle tracks. In New York City, after the construction of a protected bike lane and other improvements on 9th Avenue, local businesses experienced a 49% increase in retail sales, compared to 3% increases in the rest of Manhattan. In Portland, Oregon, people who traveled to a shopping area by bike spent 24% more per month than those who traveled by car.
Comparable studies found revealed similar trends in Toronto and three cities in New Zealand.

**Palm Beach County Supports Local Bike-Ped Efforts**

Palm Beach County supports bicycle and pedestrian developments. Palm Beach County’s Metropolitan Planning Organization has the following vision in its Master Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan:

In 2035 Palm Beach County will be a place where bicycling is experienced as

- A safe and convenient transportation option, and
- An attractive form of recreation for residents and visitors alike

**Comparative Costs of Automobile and Bicycle Transportation**

Not surprisingly, the cost of automobile transportation far exceeds the cost of bicycle transportation. The State of Ohio DOT estimates:

- Cost of lane-mile for 2-lane roads - $120,000
- Cost of lane-mile for 4-lane roads - $502,000 (Includes cost of ramps but not lighting, guardrails, noise walls)
- Cost of cycle tracks can vary greatly from a low cost of $5,360 to more than $400,000 a mile. The median cost is $86,470 or $100,000 per mile of protected bike lane.

There are numerous Federal and State grants to fund bike-ped pathway construction, including funds from the Department of Transportation and the Department of Environmental Protection. In addition there are private foundations such as People for Bikes that fund protected bike lanes.

**How You Can Help**

To make Delray a safer and more inviting city, we need many more Delray citizens to speak up for a walkable and bikeable future. We need you to get involved and lend your voice, your energy, your creativity, your passion, and your connections.

Contact us at: [http://humanpowereddelray.org/](http://humanpowereddelray.org/)
This study was written using data from a variety of published and online sources that are available upon request.