

Title:

Using a "Slow Ride" Bicycle Group to Accelerate an Active Transportation Program

Date:

April 1, 2017

Word Count:

2893 words text + 10 table/figures x 250 words (each) = 5393

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1 **ABSTRACT**

2 Need to improve your community's pedestrian/bicycle culture and infrastructure? Develop a
3 "Slow Ride"! Cheviot, Ohio, a small city (approx. 1 mi²), has boomed – and is now battling
4 decline. In this tight budgeted car-centric City, Active Transportation improvements were
5 overlooked, until now.

6

7 Tired of waiting for Active Transportation improvements, I designed the Cheviot "Slow Ride", a
8 bicycle meet-up group, to encourage an Active Transportation culture. This ride, based on
9 Detroit's "Slow Roll" movement, provides opportunities for those uncomfortable with riding on
10 streets to ride in large groups, resulting in "street-riding" confidence. Many riders claimed that
11 they "have not ridden for years" and "had to dust off their bikes".

12

13 Thanks to our enthusiastic members and the opportunity to meet officials, stakeholders, and
14 non-profits, the City Council president asked me (now, the local bike leader) to develop the
15 City's first Active Transportation Plan (ATP), as part of the City's Vision 2020 master plan – a
16 huge accomplishment for only 2 years of grass roots and social media efforts.

17

18 This ATP will strategically, plan, fund, and implement Active Transportation projects/policies to
19 maximize benefits. To help the public understand Active Transportation, I developed an
20 interactive Story Map with a user-friendly mobile GIS survey from ESRI's web apps.

21

22 As a resident, and Traffic engineer/planner, it was my responsibility to make where I live and
23 play better, safer, and more enjoyable for all modes of transportation. A City's greatest assets
24 are their streets – it should be our philosophy and responsibility to make them complete.

1 INTRODUCTION

2 I started and organized the Cheviot “Slow Ride” Bicycle Group in the spring of 2015 and the ride
3 has started its 3rd season in the spring of 2017. Our successful rides, occurring the first
4 Thursday of every month, averages 20-30 riders per ride coming from the community of 8,000
5 residents and the city-wide area. I’ve been working with local 501c3 groups, the City of Cheviot
6 administration, and City council to promote bike culture, safety, and awareness as a Volunteer.
7 Through the positive exposure that the “Slow Ride” has received, I’ve been helping the City
8 develop an Active Transportation Plan (ATP) as part of the Vision 2020 master plan, assisting
9 them in grant writing, and promoting the need for pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements in
10 the community.

11 12 Setting

13 After relocating back to Cincinnati from the Denver office (where I biked to work daily and “lived”
14 the bike culture) I realized that my community in Cheviot, OH did not have an established bike
15 culture and lacked cycling awareness and infrastructure. The City of Cheviot is often referred to
16 as the “Heart of the West Side” (of Cincinnati), due to its urban, friendly, and small town
17 characteristics. Located adjacent to the western limit of Cincinnati, Cheviot is a densely packed
18 community (1.17 square mile area), which contains a nucleolus of small businesses, banks,
19 restaurants, schools/libraries, churches, pubs, and government facilities along its main
20 thoroughfares. This core is an aging community surrounded by single-family homes built in the
21 early to mid-1900s, apartments, two elementary schools, and relatively large parks/playgrounds
22 – and the area is very easy to navigate by bicycle and the main streets are generally in good
23 pavement conditions. However, the City currently does not have on- or off-street bicycle
24 facilities. Within the City limits, speed limits are posted at 25 mph, but wide feeling streets, due
25 to the intermittent use of on-street parking egg, on motorist to drive fast, resulting in rattled
26 cyclists – who often traverse on narrow sidewalks to “feel safe”. Drivers assuming that bicyclist
27 will use the sidewalks are equally uneasy with the few cyclists that use the roadway. Unable to
28 utilize streets for safe bicycling is a lost opportunity for the City, as they are in the process of
29 reinventing themselves. Bicycle improvements would spearhead the revitalization and
30 rebranding, as many street characteristics are idea candidates for road diets, traffic calming,
31 green boulevards, and bicycle improvements, resulting in an increase in users’ confidence.

32 33 Challenges

34 Like most small mid-western cities, Cheviot had a boom period, but is struggling on a tight
35 budget. Most improvements are achieved through grants. In this car-centric CBD and
36 neighborhood, cycling improvements were not considered. However, recently, the City has
37 taken an interest in applying for “Healthy Living” type of grants. In 2015, Cheviot was awarded
38 the title of a “2015 Playful City USA Community” funded by KaBoom and a “WeThrive!” grant
39 from the Centers for Disease Control. In 2015, Cheviot was selected as one of the 10 official
40 “All-star neighborhoods”, for the MLB All-Star game held in Cincinnati, due to the City’s great
41 walkability and dense business district. However, none of the improvements developed from this
42 grant money and new statuses were focused on Bicycle and Pedestrian improvements (Active
43 Transportation), or safe routes to schools for the neighborhood children. In 2015, it was the
44 perfect time to strike with a bicycle organization that would increase the City’s awareness of
45 needs to support an active and healthy bicycle and pedestrian culture, as well as point out the
46 economic benefits that an Active Transportation culture can bring to a small community.

47 48 Taking Action

49 Tired waiting for Active Transportation improvements to happen, I wanted to take action, so I
50 designed the Cheviot “Slow Ride” based on the “Slow Roll” movement in Detroit to increase the

1 bike and Active Transportation culture. Also, I used this ride to meet the City officials,
2 community stakeholders, and other local non-profit organizations. Our “Slow Rides” provided an
3 opportunity for those not comfortable with riding on the streets to ride as in a large group and
4 boost “street-riding” confidence. Many riders claim that they “have not ridden for years” and that
5 they “had to dust off their bikes” and “put air in their tires” minutes before the ride.

6
7 Frank Henson, President of Queen City Bike, a large bike advocacy and riding group for the
8 greater Cincinnati region, stated that he’s never experienced friendlier ride than the Cheviot
9 “Slow Ride”. He also labeled the “Slow Ride” as “The West Side Ride (of Cincinnati).” The City
10 of Cheviot has been very supportive of the Cheviot “Slow Ride’s” needs by transporting City-
11 owned barricades to the “Slow Ride’s” event locations to serve as temporary bicycle parking, as
12 the City currently does not have designated bicycle parking in the business district to
13 accommodate the riders. Local businesses have been also supportive of the “Slow Ride” by
14 promoting with poster and social media, sponsoring events, and allowing the City to temporarily
15 barricade off street parking for bicycles in front of their businesses.

16
17 Taking action with this “Slow Ride” not only helped build bike culture in the community, but
18 helped me identify the community’s bike enthusiasts. After each ride, our group gatherings at
19 local business also provided an opportunity to introduce the community’s bicyclist to the various
20 business owners. These connections with local business will hopefully make it easier for us to
21 call upon the businesses for grant sponsorships, as needed. By nature, our rides gather
22 attention. A group of 20-30 members, riding 8 mph along the City’s main streets made an
23 enormous statement that *bicyclist exist* in the City and are permitted to ride on the roadways. In
24 general, motorists who traveled past our “Slow Ride” remained positive. Our media attention
25 from local newspapers, our Facebook page, and word or mouth caught the attention of the City
26 administration.

27 Solution

28 After the “Slow Ride” was established, I use my traffic engineering/planning and traffic safety
29 expertise to help educate our riders and the City on riding techniques, strategies, and what
30 improvements would greatly enhance our City. Through our social media outlets our cause
31 connected with almost 240 of people in a community of 8,000.

32
33
34 The City of Cheviot developed a Vision 2020 master plan to help understand the City’s existing
35 infrastructure and economy, as well as develop a plan for the future. As the vocal and de facto
36 “leader” of bicycling in the City, I was asked by the president of the City Council to form a
37 committee and develop an ATP for the City – an area not represented in previous Vision plans.

38
39 As a volunteer, I’m helping develop and organize an ATP to strategically, plan, fund, and
40 implement bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects and policies to maximize benefit. This
41 is a huge step for a car-centric City to realize that they need this type of planning – and all this
42 occurred within 2 years of the “Slow Ride’s” grass roots efforts. Our plan’s advisory committee
43 consists of a representative cross-section of age, ability, race, and gender, as well as Cheviot’s
44 bicycle enthusiasts and local business owners, City leaders, community organization members,
45 and leaders within Cheviot’s city administration.

46
47 I’ve developed an online public meeting campaign to educate the public on the importance of
48 Active Transportation. This tool includes a GIS-based social mapping survey to allow the public
49 to comment on the City’s existing infrastructure and it’s compatibility with Active Transportation.
50 As a result of these volunteer efforts, we now have a working Active Transportation online tool.

1 This ATP will help the City plan and prioritize Active Transportation through leadership,
2 planning, and policy, as well as identify community partnerships and funding sources.
3 Ultimately, this plan will result in a safe, connected, accessible, and environmentally sustainable
4 pedestrian and bicycle friendly system that links where we all live, work and play. From our
5 efforts, our group has noticed a huge increase in bicycle ridership in the community, both with
6 the young and old riders.

7 **PRODUCTING AN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

8 What is Active Transportation?

9 According to the [Ohio Department of Transportation \(ODOT\) Active Transportation Guide](#),
10 Active Transportation is summarized as a healthy human-powered mode of travel that is
11 exhibited through physical activity while we travel from place to place. People walking, bicycling,
12 using strollers, wheelchairs/mobility devices, skateboarding, and rollerblading are engaged in
13 Active Transportation. Active Transportation supports transit use, since many people reach
14 transit stops using these active travel modes.

15

16 Purpose of an Active Transportation Plan

17 The development of an ATP must be establish to strategically, plan, fund, and implement
18 infrastructure projects and policies to maximize benefit for the agency. An ATP serves as a
19 framework or “roadmap” for incorporating Active Transportation into the planning process and
20 ensuring that today’s transportation investments help support and sustain a healthy community
21 of the future. The ATP that our team developed will be used by elected officials and the City’s
22 policy makers, transportation and health professionals contracted by the City, and county and
23 regional agencies working in City limits, as the framework to implement Active Transportation
24 within the City’s jurisdiction. A key reason to develop an ATP is that many grants applications
25 require ATPs or similar frameworks and policies to be adopted and supported at an agency
26 level to qualify for funding.

27

28 ATP Project Team Responsibilities

29 To champion this plan, I developed a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. These
30 Committee members are responsible for developing the 2016 ATP and it’s maintenance up to
31 2020. The members represent a cross-section residents and business leaders of all ages,
32 skills, needs, and interests within the City to gain maximum support. Members help developed
33 potential projects, possible project phasing, ranking, and conceptual costs.

34

35 City Administration and Leadership

36 In addition to the advisory committee, we identified City administration and leaders that are
37 responsible for supporting the ATP and implementing this framework’s recommendations within
38 the City’s jurisdiction. These leaders will allocate City monies, apply for grants and funding
39 sources, and connect with possible area donors to deploy improvement projects listed in this
40 plan. These leaders will be the liaison between the Plan members and City Council, as well as
41 advocate the plan’s vision, goals, objectives, and projects’ purpose and needs. These leaders
42 will also promote the implementation of policies recommended in this plan and direct law
43 enforcement to create a safe environment for walking and cycling.

44 **ELEMENTS OF AN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

45 Identification of Facility User’s Existing Uses, Needs, and Project Challenges

46 The City of Cheviot is small city approximately 1.2 square miles. The City’s streets are relatively
47 low traffic and speeds are typically signed for 25 mph, ideal to support a variety of low-cost
48 improvements. Many residents, businesses, visitors, and commuters access the City’s main

1 thoroughfares. These classes of users have different uses and needs for the City streets and
 2 sidewalks; thus this ATP anticipated this diversity and the project challenges that may occur for
 3 each main user group. This broad planning develops well-rounded and complete solutions
 4 balancing transportation necessities for all users. Our team identified street parking, sidewalks,
 5 and city streets as common assets that Residents, Business, Visitors, and Commuters share.

6 Creation of Vision and Goals

7 A strong ATP or framework should have a vision and goals with objectives to define the
 8 direction of the plan. Our Vision in the ATP was the following: “The City of Cheviot will
 9 implement Active Transportation through leadership, planning, policy, and community
 10 partnerships that will provide safe, connected, accessible, and environmentally sustainable
 11 culture of pedestrian and bicycle friendly systems that link where we all live, work and play.”

12 Our plans goals consisted of: Safety, Accessibility, Connectivity, Culture, Health, and Quality of
 13 Place. Each of the following goals is accompanied by objectives that assist in developing
 14 appropriate solutions, as well as set targets to evaluate a solution's effectiveness:
 15
 16
 17

18 **Goal 1: Safety**

- The transportation system will be safe and comfortable for active transportation users, especially for the most vulnerable.

18 **Objectives**

- Lower vehicle speeds to at least 85% compliance through enforcement and engineering.
- Increase vehicle-yield-to-pedestrian compliance rate to at least 85% at all crosswalks.
- Increase visibility of bicycles and pedestrians at street crossings.
- Increase enforce that vehicles must pass bicycles safely with at least 3 ft clearance.
- Promote the proper use of safety equipment.
- Provide training and promote safe walking and riding within the City.

19 **Goal 2: Accessibility**

- The transportation system will support people choosing active transportation in the City, and provide options for all abilities and backgrounds in an integrated network.

19 **Objectives**

- Increase comfortable options for all active transportation uses, resulting in a redundant parallel network.
- Identify and improve routes utilized by vulnerable active transportation users.
- Develop a Safe Route to School Travel Plan and work with the local Safe Route to School Coordinator.

Goal 3: Connectivity

- The transportation system will be an interconnected active transportation network that allows for efficient transportation to the places residents and visitors want to go.

Objectives

- Increase connections of residents and visitors to business in the CBD and City-wide destinations.
- Increase connectivity between bicycling, walking, public transit routes to top destinations, and other modes of transportation.
- Increase enhanced crosswalks to provide connections across main thoroughfares.
- Increase visible and secure bicycle parking around the CBD.
- Develop Complete Street Policies that encourage sustainable growth, walking, bicycling, and transit connections for new developments.
- Develop and maintain public and private partnerships to encourage development and connectivity of active transportation facilities, including Metro bus stops (key stops with shelters).

1

Goal 4: Culture

- Residents, business owners, and community leaders will foster a change from an automobile-centric culture to an active-living culture.

Objectives

- Create a City Active Transportation Program that will make Cheviot known as a walk-and bike-friendly destination.
- Work with partners to ensure that outreach efforts have a consistent message to educate community members on safe and courteous walking, bicycling, and driving habits for children and adults.
- Provide training and best practice information to law enforcement and public officials to enforce and enact pedestrian and bicycling friendly laws and policies.

2

Goal 5: Health

- Active transportation will be integrated into daily routines in order to support healthy lifestyles for residents and the community-wide environmental benefits.

Objectives

- Work with partners to build awareness about personal and community benefits to using active transportation for daily life.

3

Goal 6: Quality of place

- The City will have sustainable, economically, and socially vibrant communities, that attract and retain people of all ages to live, work, and play, through the use of active transportation.

Objectives

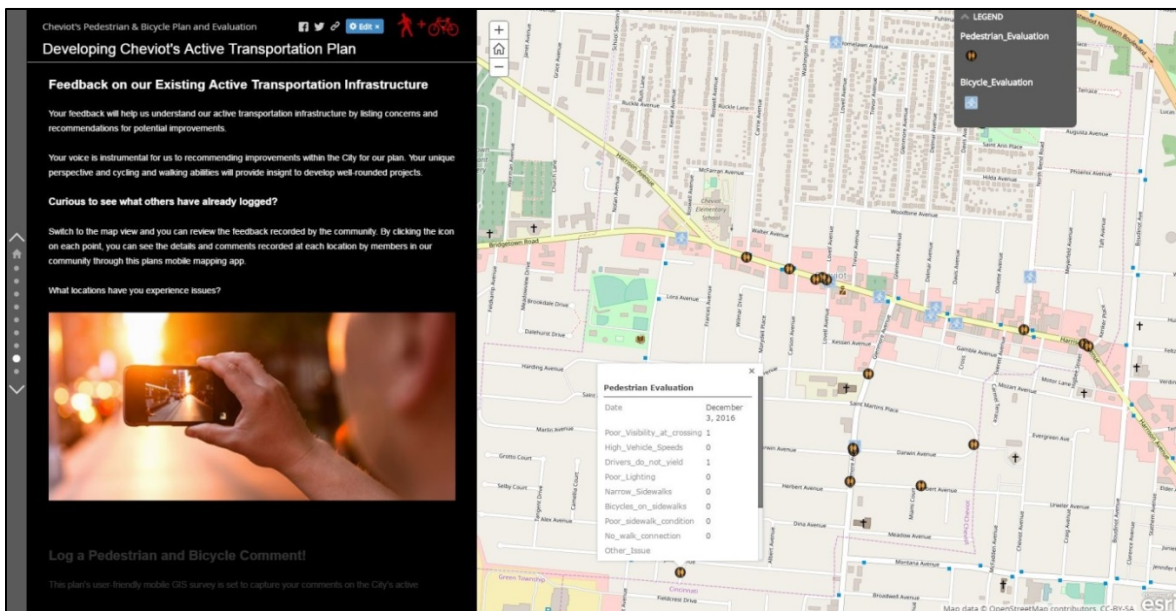
- Organize and support programs and events that promote safe active transportation year-round.
- Provide places for dogs to rest (watering holes) and places to play (dog park) strategically connected to the active transportation system
- Promote safe skating along City walks and streets
- Support and encourage curbside (outside) spaces for businesses, such as sidewalk cafes, food trucks, retail kiosks, and "farmer market-like" venues.

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Public/Stakeholder Involvement

Having the public accept your ATP starts with developing a method to collect feedback and comments. Our public involvement process utilized an ESRI Story map, shown in Figure 1, and a user friendly mobile GIS survey, shown in Figure 2. The survey was released online for the general public to comment on the City's existing transportation infrastructure and recommend Active Transportation improvements. The public logged on to the survey via home computer or log points within City limits using their GPS enabled mobile device. This data was then automatically mapped on an ERSI web map and analyzed to assist help identify recommendations and improvements. The public was notified via flyers to visit the GIS survey site and the City posted links to the web tools via the City webpage and in the public libraries in Cheviot and the neighboring community of Westwood. In addition, leading the Cheviot "Slow Ride" provided an opportunity to share ATP progress, collect feedback, and invite the Mayor and City Council to ride with us – sharing our cycling perspective with key decision makers.


Figure 1: ESRI Story Map



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Figure 2: Public Evaluation Form Excerpt



Cheviot Pedestrian & Bicycle Public Evaluation

Welcome Cheviot residents and neighboring communities and thank you for participating in this survey! You have an opportunity to help us understand our active transportation infrastructure by listing concerns and recommendations for potential improvements. Please use your GPS enabled mobile device or home computer to complete this survey. For additional information about the development of our Active Transportation Plan, please visit our [Story Map](#).

Instructions:

1. Set your mobile device's GPS to find your current location or scroll down to the bottom of your screen to select a point on the map if your point is not at your current location. **Points outside of the red City of Cheviot boundary will be deleted.**
2. Select the **Pedestrian** or **Bicycle** evaluation form to log your point.
3. Accurately answer and comment to assess our community's current infrastructure and potential improvements.
4. Attach a photo (optional) and click "submit" to send comments!


Warning: If you are riding a bicycle, please obey the rules of the road, and do not perform this survey while riding. When walking and riding a bicycle, please conduct this survey in a safe location outside of the roadway.

Disclaimer: This survey is managed by a citizens-based committee and is not sponsored by the City of Cheviot. All comments are for the committee's use only and do not obligate the City to respond, take action, or implement improvements.

1. Select Form

2. Enter Information

Today's Date

 March 30, 2017 3:50 PM

Select current date

First name

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Development of Project Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria were created to weight and rank future projects that the committee developed. A two-step ranking methodology consistently establishes a strategic approach to maximize benefits and funding for the City. Step one of the methodology develops a weight of importance of each project goal, as well as the importance of cost, implementation, and compatibility, as shown in Figure 3. Step two of the process, lists the project in an evaluation matrix and then numerically assesses how the project satisfies each goal on a low/medium/ high scale. This score is then multiplied by the weights of importance established in Step 1 and ranked, as shown in Figure 4.

1

Figure 3: Ranking Criteria Weights

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H			
	Safety	Accessibility	Connectivity	Culture	Health	Quality of Place	Cost	Implementation	Compatibility	Totals	Weights
Safety	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	9	20.0
Accessibility	B	C	D	B	B	B	B	B	B	6	13.3
Connectivity	C	C	C	C	C	C	H	I	I	6	13.3
Culture	D	D	F	D	D	I	I	I	I	5	11.1
Health	E	F	G	H	I	I	I	I	I	1	2.2
Quality of Place	F	G	F	I	I	I	I	I	I	4	8.9
Cost	G	H	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	3	6.7
Implementation	H	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	4	8.9
Compatibility	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	7	15.6
										Total	45
											100.0

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Figure 4: Project Evaluation Matrix Excerpt

Projects	Weighted Criteria									Totals	Ranks
	Safety	Accessibility	Connectivity	Culture	Health	Quality of Place	Cost	Implementation	Compatibility		
	20.0	13.3	13.3	11.1	2.2	8.9	6.7	8.9	15.6		
Bike Lanes on Glenmore (remove parking one-side)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	300.0	1
Bike Lanes on Washington to Blvd (remove parking one-side)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	300.0	1
Right-Turn-on-Reds on City Signals (Remove on North Bend)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	300.0	1
City Gateways/Chokers (Concrete)	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	286.7	4
Curb Extensions/Bulbouts - Glenmore	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	286.7	4
Curb Extensions/Bulbouts - Hamison	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	286.7	4
Sharrows on Hamson/Bridgetown (Symbol / Signs)	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	286.7	4
Sharrows on Woodbine (Symbol / Signs)	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	286.7	4
Bike Lanes on North Bend	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	284.4	9
Bike Lanes/Sharrows on Harding (remove parking one-side)	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	284.4	9
Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons - Hamison (Pair)	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	284.4	9
Paper Street - Homelawn (10' path) Improvement	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	2	3	280.0	12
Sharrows on Davis (Symbol / Signs)	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	277.8	13
Sharrows on Glenmore North (Symbol/Signs)	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	277.8	13
Curb Extensions/Bulbouts - North Bend	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	277.8	15

4

1 Other Plan Elements

2 The ATP also discusses a Gap/Barrier assessment of the current infrastructure. This
3 assessment will look at obstacles to provide accessible and connected facilities for all users.
4 Also, the ATP will outline and identify potential funding sources for the City administration to
5 target. In addition, the ATP will identify Plans and Policies that should be adopted, such as a
6 *Complete Street Policy* or *Safe Routes to School* evaluation plan, and the plan may provide in
7 depth details to help develop these policies.
8

9 **CONCLUSIONS**

10 Prior to the “Slow Ride”, Cheviot, OH had no recognizable bicycle culture and the City was not
11 planning to implement bicycle infrastructure projects. The “Slow Ride”, in essence, organized an
12 underground bicycle culture already existing in Cheviot and provided an outlet for riders to ride
13 as a group and be visible, resulting in the attention of the City. Through this visibility and the
14 *safety-in-numbers* mentality, additional members not part of the original underground bicycle
15 culture joined this safe riding environment, strengthening the bicycle culture to over 240
16 members in 2 years. In addition, the “Slow Ride” provides a platform to showcase the
17 community’s interest in Active Transportation.
18

19 Results of the “Slow Ride” efforts to accelerate a City-wide Active Transportation Program are
20 positive. The city has a working draft of an ATP and an increased interest in bicycle planning.
21 In October 2016, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee presented a preliminary ATP
22 and recommended projects to the Cheviot 2020 Vision committee to gain feedback. After the
23 meeting, the Mayor showed high interest in the deployment of rectangular rapid flashing
24 beacons, bicycle lanes, and sharrows. In addition, the Mayor was interested in liking up the City
25 to the trail network of neighboring community.

1 **Acknowledgments**

2 A special thanks to the:

3 [City of Cheviot, OH](#); the

4 [Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County](#);

5 [Queen City Bike](#); and the

6 [Cheviot "Slow Ride" Bicycle Group](#)

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