

Advocacy Column

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Can RI create bicycle friendly communities?

On May 1, the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) announced eleven new communities as recipients of Bicycle Friendly Community designation. Eleven communities with existing designations were renewed at their original level or elevated to a higher level. After five years and 213 applications LAB has designated 84 communities in 31 states across the country as Bicycle Friendly.

LAB Bicycle Friendly Communities are as diverse as Silver designation recipients—**Colorado Springs**, Colorado, population 350,890, area 234 square miles—**Minneapolis**, Minnesota, population 373,188, area 58 square miles—**Sitka**, Alaska, population 8883, area 4811 Square miles.

There are four award levels - Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze plus honorable mentions for those communities much improved but not quite there yet. Bicycle Friendly designation is awarded to communities with established records in two or more of five categories:

- Education: Does the community have systems in place to train children and adult cyclists?
- Engineering: Are bicyclists included in the city's transportation plan?
- Enforcement: Do police officers understand and enforce bicyclists' rights and responsibilities?
- Encouragement: Does the community participate in Bike Month, offer bike rodeos, host community bike rides, or otherwise encourage cycling?
- Evaluation: Does the community have methods in place to ensure their bicyclist programs are making a difference?

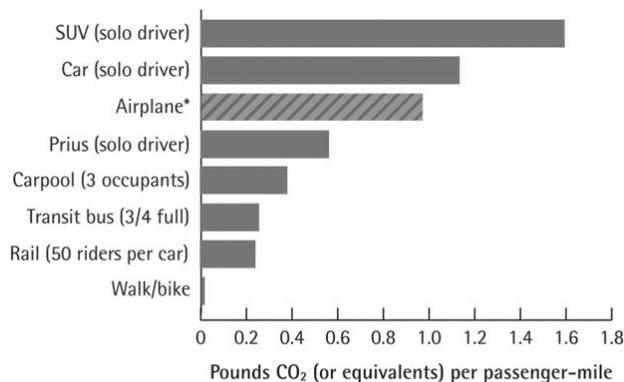


Davis, California, was the first city to receive the platinum designation. If you wonder how it has affected the community, go to their web site www.city.davis.ca, and note the bicycle drawing on the home page heading, bicycle references, and numerous links to bicycle activities throughout the site. Davis worked long and hard to bring their city to a level that qualified it for designation in 2003.

Portland, Oregon, recipient of a Gold Award in 2003 received Platinum Designation this year. Andy Clarke, LAB president, credits bold leadership, community-wide involvement, and years of hard work to their award. Portland has a population of 533,492 (half the population of RI) in an area of 134 square miles.

As you ride your bike this summer, think about your town and how it might qualify as bicycle friendly. Is your community almost ready to submit an application? Are there others in your town who would work with you to increase bike resources around your neighborhoods? Are you willing to work with your town officials to create an atmosphere safe for cyclists? Would your town qualify if traffic controls and bicycle resources were installed?

No village, town or city in RI has ever received LAB Bicycle Friendly Community designation. Few have ever applied. If Sitka and Minneapolis, with seemingly never-ending winters, can achieve bicycle friendly designations why not our towns? We enjoy long winters too. Summer is a great time to bicycle in Rhode Island. But next winter will be an excellent time to work with your town to create a Bicycle Friendly Community.



*Aircraft emissions are the most variable. Use an online calculator, such as Atmosfair.com, to estimate the climate impacts of your flight.

