



Shifting Gears: Promoting Rochester's Two-Wheeled Revolution

A Project of the Genesee Community Charter School
Sixth Grade Class of 2013

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What one class can do...

During our year-long study of Rochester's Bicycle Master Plan, we wanted to foster a sustainable bike culture at our own school.



With the idea “think globally, act locally” in our minds, we set off to try a few things and then share what we learned with the public.

This report is the culmination of our efforts. We hope you will be inspired to take part in Rochester's two-wheeled revolution!

Our Vision

We aspire to create a bicycle-friendly culture in our community by promoting the Rochester Bicycle Master Plan and working with local organizations and our school community to use active transportation to link our neighbors and neighborhoods together.

“Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving.”

- Albert Einstein

Timeline

- Sep 2012** GCCS sixth graders are invited to help “spark” a bicycling revolution among youth in Rochester.
- Nov 2012** Sixth graders present preliminary research to an expert panel to identify peer cities to visit and research.
- Feb 2013** GCCS Bike Expo draws 185 people to learn about bicycling safety, nutrition, and bike maintenance.
- Mar 2013** Sixth graders embark on their “Four Cities” trips to Portland, OR; Austin, TX; Madison, WI; and Denver, CO.
- April 2013** GCCS Students present to RCA and at GFLATS, sharing their vision for a bike-friendly city to critical acclaim.
- May 2013** May 15: Rochester's first ever Bike Train routes roll down University Ave. and Meigs St.
- May 2013** May 19: ROC Kidical Mass ride along the Erie Canal draws 45 participants. Created by kids for kids!
- May 2013** May 30: GCCS class of 2013 presents “Shifting Gears” lecture to the public, outlining ways to get more people in our city on bikes.
- June 2013** Sixth graders plan for lasting infrastructure improvements at school with a new bike rack design.

Rochester's Two-Wheeled Revolution Has Begun.



Every year, sixth grade studies a “hot topic” in Rochester and performs some kind of an important service project for the community. This past fall, we were given the charge by Jon Schull (the secretary of the Rochester Cycling Alliance) and Mr. Erik Frisch (Transportation Specialist for the City of Rochester), to promote a two-wheeled revolution for Rochester by finding ways to connect our community through biking. We have spent the first half of our year learning about the ancient origins of roads and the science of cycling. We also held a Bike Expo to help kids in our community learn about bike maintenance, choosing the right bike, nutrition and exercise through cycling, and bike safety.

This year we went on many field studies. One field study was to R Community Bikes. They give away bikes to people who can't afford one. They also repair bikes for free. Alongside our background research, we began to research cities that were experts at being bike-friendly (the cities were: Portland, Madison, Austin, Denver, Seattle, Bay Area, Tempe, Salt Lake City, and Minneapolis). We learned about the ratings given by the League of American Cyclists to rate the level of biking in all cities in the U.S. and began to think about the importance of capturing the culture established in these silver, gold, and platinum level cities (Rochester was bronze). We wanted to make sure that the cities we visited were similar in many qualities (like size and weather) to Rochester and had unique qualities that we may be able to adopt here.

In November, we presented our research about the cities to a panel of our teachers, administrators, and bike experts in the Rochester Community. They helped us to decide that we should visit Madison, WI; Austin, TX; Denver and Boulder, CO; and Portland, OR. (However, in order to get to these places, we spent part of our time doing fundraisers to raise money for our trip). In March we split our class into fourths and set off to the four cities to capture their culture. We spent our time researching reliable primary-source documents such as master plans, city planning maps, and brochures, and interviewed countless stakeholders, city planners, government officials, and representatives from non-profit organizations.

For example, Denver had the chance to interview Governor Hickenlooper and Austin met their city Mayor Leffingwell and Senator Ellis. Portland had the opportunity to spend time with Mia Birk (President of Alta planning and design and the first bicycle program coordinator for Portland) and Roger Geller (the current bicycle program coordinator), while Madison even had the chance to spend time with Richard Schwinn, the great grandson of the founder of Schwinn bicycles. All of these experts gave us valuable and trusted information and advice to carry back with us to Rochester.

In the spirit of capturing culture, we also spent lots of time taking pictures, writing notes, and making observations in the expert cities. We made sure to also get on bikes ourselves to experience their amazing bike infrastructure first hand! We saw in several cities that bikes were used for businesses. For instance, food deliveries were done by bike instead of cars! In Madison they even got to ride in the snow, which convinced us that people in Rochester can bike in the snow too.

We repeatedly heard from the experts that we need to start small with little infrastructure projects such as signage or painted lanes or start with a small group of people for an event. But, the most important thing was to connect people in the community together through bicycling. We heard multiple times that listening to community input is important when revising the master plan, but it is also important to educate the public so they are knowledgeable in giving advice. We believe that if Rochester can follow these pieces of advice, then we will be able to start a two-wheeled revolution and earn a silver or even gold medal for our city!



“The bicycle is the noblest invention of mankind.”
- William Saroyan
(Nobel Prize Winner)

When we returned, we were really excited about what we had learned and had several ideas for what we could do. Here is a list of things we did. We presented the advice we were given from our four cities experts to the Rochester Cycling Alliance Board and to bike enthusiasts at the Genesee Finger-Lakes Active Transportation Summit. We held several bike events during bike week such as the first annual ride your bike to school day and our own bike day celebration where we biked to Cobb’s Hill from school and did a series of activities there. We also held a Kidical Mass ride along the Erie Canal path and got many kids from the Rochester community to participate. In addition, we are working on designing a new bike rack to be donated to our school as a gift from our class as we head to other schools next year.

Our class was very curious to understand why citizens of Rochester were not using biking as a mode of transportation. So, we decided to focus on our school first and developed a survey for the purpose of acquiring information about biking in our school. Over 50% of our students and families were surveyed and we found that there were several recurring reasons throughout all ages why people didn’t use bikes as transportation. We correlated this information with data found in Rochester’s Bike Master Plan. Using this information, we found that there are several common misunderstandings about biking that fall into four categories: awareness and education, infrastructure, safety, and encouragement. Within these categories, we have named eleven “myths” that we will address and disprove.



There are many misconceptions that people have about bicycling. We would like to share the facts.

Awareness & Education

“Not Everyone Can Ride a Bike”

One of the reasons many people do not want to support bicycling in Rochester is because they don't think everybody can or should ride a bike. Even though bicycle means “two wheels” not all of them have two wheels. There are recumbent trikes, cruiser bikes, and even electric bikes to help you get to someplace quick.

During our research in Denver, we learned about electric assist bikes. Electric assist bikes help you pedal for long distances without having to put much effort into it. The bike uses a motor and a torque sensor to measure how fast you're going and calculate how much assistance you need to pedal. These bikes would allow people that can't ride bikes or have trouble riding one to be able to get on a bike! Electric assist bikes

aren't the only bikes that can help. There are also Tandem bikes. This is a bike with two bike seats, two handlebars, and two sets of pedals. This two-person bike helps people that don't ride or commute by bike gain the experience with a more seasoned bike rider.

At the Genesee Finger Lakes Active Transportation Summit (G-FLATS), we met Dr. Brad Berk. Dr. Berk is a professor at the University of Rochester who was in bicycling accident near Canandaigua and broke his neck. Once he got to the hospital, his doctors discouraged him from riding a bike ever again, but he thought otherwise. Now Dr. Berk rides a bike called an I.C.E Tricycle (Inspired Cycle Engineering). It has two wheels in the front and one in the back and is designed for people who can't ride bikes due to physical or mental limitations. Today

he rides nine miles confidently and successfully and will be participating in this year's Tour de Cure ride.

Also at G-FLATS, some of us met Theresa Bowick, the founder of “Conkey Cruisers.” Ms. Bowick is a nurse living on Conkey Avenue. She started Conkey Cruisers to get her neighborhood into exercise and to ride bikes. The cruisers are large trikes designed for people with minimal biking experience. Cruisers not only get exercise in the neighborhood, but her organization helps to dispel the negative opinions of bicycling. Another organization that is getting children on bikes is called “iCan Bike” Camp, a local program held each summer that helps people with developmental disabilities learn to ride a two-wheeler.

“Nobody Will Ride in Our Weather”

As anyone who lives in Rochester can tell you, we are well known for our snowy winters. We often get 100 inches of snow each winter, but we also have beautiful weather that gives us the Lilac Festival each spring and amazing colors each fall.

The weather shouldn't hold us back in Rochester! Just because it cold and snowy out, it doesn't mean you can't ride your bike. If you have the right gear and the right bike, it's possible to ride any time of year. There are special snow bikes called "fat bikes". These allow you to plow through the snow using its very thick tires. It's also a large bike, so it's not held back by snow. When we held our Bike Expo this past winter, we invited Tryon Bikes and they brought a fat bike for us to look at. Of course, it requires some practice riding this kind of bike.

In Madison, our crew found that riding in the snow was not bad at all! All we had to do was dress warmly and watch out for ice, but it was definitely possible. Not only does it snow in Rochester, but we also get our share of rain. Just like when it snows, you need the right bike and accessories. Rochester riders will need rain gear and possibly a fender to keep water from spraying on them. A headlamp and tail lights also help make you visible during rain and snow.



In Austin, we learned about speed-sensitive traffic lights for motorists and cyclists, so that when they come to an intersection, the light changes to green quickly. This helps get riders home faster in bad weather. In order for Rochester's bicyclists to be as safe and confident in all kinds of weather, we will need to train them with classes and workshops. You can really ride in any kind of weather!

“Bikes Are Expensive”

Many people assume you need a special kind of bike to commute. You really only need a bike (any kind will do) and a helmet to ride. As long as you have a bike that will get you where you need to go, the helmet is very inexpensive. It is true that for some people, the cost of a bike and helmet is still just too much for them. There are programs out in our community that help people who are less fortunate get a hold of bikes and helmets without any expense.

For example, [R Community Bikes](#) is a local volunteer program that takes old and broken bikes that are donated and fixes them up to give away to citizens in need of a mode of travel. They also sell bikes, helmets, and locks to the general public, but adults need a letter that

explains why this person needs a bike. In one year, they have given away as many as 2,700 bikes! R Community Bikes also supports kids to get into the pedaling revolution by letting them buy a bike for just \$5.00. They have to have parent supervision of course.

There are also many other organizations in the Rochester area to get ahold of bicycle safety equipment, like the Kohl's Pedal Patrol. They are part of the Rochester Injury Free Coalition for Kids and provide helmet giveaways at local bike rodeos.

Still looking for a bike? If you are a University of Rochester student, you can tap into borrowing a bike from City Cycles. This is a program that allows U of R students to borrow bikes, commute to class, and explore off campus experiences.

As you can see, biking can be a very inexpensive mode of transportation especially when you compare it to owning and maintaining a car. And just like a seat belt in a car, a bike helmet can save a life. The idea that biking is an expensive "hobby" just isn't true. Bicycling is for everyone.

“Bicycling is a big part of the future. It has to be. There's something wrong with a society that drives a car to workout in a gym.”

- Bill Nye
(The Science Guy)

What One Class Can Do: Raising Awareness in Rochester

In order to make people aware of the benefits of bicycling, we held a Bike Expo this past February. The Bike Expo taught children about bike maintenance, safety, exercise and nutrition, and about the different types of bikes. We invited local experts to share their knowledge and also held a bike drive for R Community Bikes, a local bicycling charity.

We also presented our research with the Board of the Rochester Cycling Alliance and at the Genesee-Finger Lakes Active Transportation Summit in April 2013. Sharing display panels, delivering a well-received speech, and interacting with policy makers and bicycle advocates was an honor and a highlight of our year!

“Think of bicycles as rideable art that can just about save the world.”

- Grant Petersen
(author, *Just Ride*)





“Cycle tracks will
abound in Utopia.”
- H.G. Wells



Bicycle Infrastructure

“Nobody Bikes in Rochester”

“I rarely see bicyclists so there’s really no need for such infrastructure.” We’d like to explore this assumption and explain why it is simply wrong. Often it seems that people only see what is “normal” to them. And to many, the car is the normal form of transportation. When you get into your car, do you stop to think about bicyclists or their safety? Could it possibly be that nobody believes that bicycles are on the roads at all?

Even though some motorists can’t “see” cyclists, they are, of course, present. According to the 2010 US Census, 1,325 people commute by bike every day in Rochester, about 1.6% of the population (that’s double the percentage in 2005!). Did you know that 71% of Americans say that they would love to bike more than they currently do? The lack of infrastructure is keeping people off their bikes and off of the streets!

During our time in Madison, we counted over 40 people biking on

a day that it was cold and raining, and that’s only on the way to one of our meetings! If we saw forty people on a really bad day, then how many more would bike during the summer months when it’s warm and sunny? In Portland, OR, we counted 15 bicyclists in 10 minutes on the streets, or a rate of about 1.5 cyclists a minute. Both of these cities have amazing bicycle infrastructures to entice people to commute and it was apparent in both cases that people there use it and love it.

Rochester is doing its part, too. As part of the new East Avenue Wegman’s supermarket expansion, Probert Street was made one way and bike lanes were added. While at GFLATS, Danny Wegman, Wegman’s CEO, announced that he would personally make sure that the new store had a bike rack. It’s been so successful, that they need another rack!

We’re beginning to see right here in Rochester that there is a need for more infrastructure. The Rochester

Bicycle Master Plan has outlined where some of these new features will be placed, like the new cycletrack. Our city wants to move from a Bronze level to a platinum level bike friendly city in five years! In order to do that, we’ll need a better bicycle infrastructure.

“Bike Infrastructure Is Expensive”

Let’s face it, any investment in transportation costs money and bicycle infrastructure is no exception. It can cost quite a bit. In fact, a single mile of bike lane costs from \$5,000 to \$50,000, and a cycletrack costs can get up to \$1,000,000 per mile. That is definitely expensive, especially for a city with a struggling economy. Did you know that a mile of single lane highway costs from \$2.4 million to \$6.9 million? And that’s only a single lane!

It is the belief of many citizens that when the government purchases, say, a single mile of bicycle infrastructure, then they will have no money left to fund their town or city, but bicycle infrastructure costs are less than 2% of any transportation budget.

Did you know that in 2011, the average American spent \$4,000 on gasoline in the whole year? And people who bike have a much more disposable income because they will spend less on gasoline. Community members who bike are more likely to reinvest in the local economy, since they will have more money to spend on local business.

There are definitely some other concerns about the cost to build and maintain the bike infrastructure. According to The League of American Bicyclists' Economic Benefits of Bicycling Infrastructure Investments report, regions that have invested in bicycling have seen a beneficial impact on their economies.

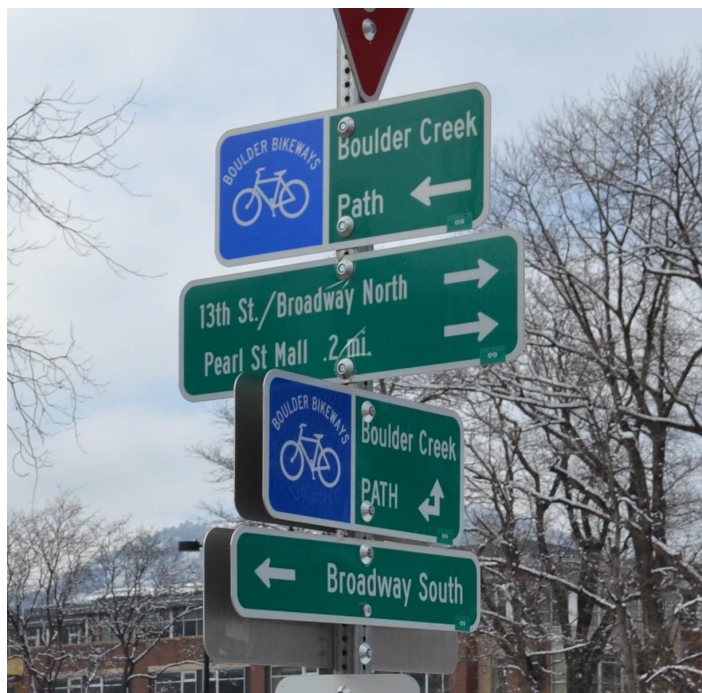
A study commissioned by the Colorado Department of Transportation in 2000 determined that bicycling contributed \$1 billion to the economy from manufacturing, retail, tourism and bike races. As a result of policies to encourage bicycling and maintain urban density, which reduce auto-dependency, Portland residents save on transportation cost and have more money to spend on things they value. Spending 1% of your total transportation budget to bike infrastructure (as Portland does) is not a lot of money, and will yield great results by attracting visitors, residents and businesses. Mia Birk, a successful bicycle planner from Portland said "If you build it, they will come." This means that if you build the infrastructure more people will use

it making them willing to pay to support the infrastructure.

A quote similar to this was said by Dave Northfield, a worker at the Sunday Parkways program in Portland, who made the comment, "People will be more willing to bike if the community, their friends and the people they love are there along with them." In New York City, they discovered that shops along the Ninth Avenue cycletrack saw a 49% increase in business as opposed to just a 3% increase in stores across the rest of Manhattan. That's a pretty good return on a cycletrack investment!

We have revealed that bicycle infrastructure, while expensive, costs a fraction of the amount of traditional highways and a safe, designated bike path will get more people on bikes. Bicycle infrastructure gives back to the city a whole lot more than just a being a path from point A to point B. Bicycle infrastructure helps move people and those people have money and are willing to spend it locally. Bike Infrastructure matters!

"Let me tell you what I think of bicycling. I think it has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world."
- Susan B. Anthony



What One Class Can Do: Building a Better Bike Rack

Infrastructure is one of the most important ingredients to a bike-friendly city. If we don't have any infrastructure, it limits people to biking on the sidewalks and locking their bikes to lamp posts. The Rochester Bicycle Master Plan has outlined the kinds of infrastructure our city needs to maintain a sustainable bicycle culture. Bicycle parking has increased, bike lanes and sharrows are found on city streets, and soon a cycle track (a dedicated, bikes-only path) will be built.

We are doing our part in designing a bigger bike rack for our school. This is a project that evolved from our work in art class and in math. We are working with a local artist, John Grieco to design a bike rack to leave as our contribution to building bicycle infrastructure at GCCS. As Mia Birk says, "Build it, and they will come."

"Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of riding a bike."

- John F. Kennedy



Reflections On Riding

Biking Denver by Claire

I remember... the fun intelligent people, dedicated to make a difference, creating useful facilities all around town.

I remember... getting lost in the city, which made me feel more at home. Making the time last while we had it.

I remember...

The laughter

The cheer

The stride

I remember... taking so many notes, it made my hand hurt. Riding with a broken tire, made me slower but stronger.

I remember... the collaboration of people working together to make a change, a better change.

I remember... everyone wanting to make a difference, and succeeding.

I remember... bicycling Denver.

Describe the Ride by Fiona

I ride swiftly through the streets of Rochester.
I hear bicycle wheels run against the sidewalk.
I feel the chafing rub of the handlebars.
I taste the sweet sweat and smell a nearby restaurant.
The breeze runs through my hair as I ride.

Biking in the Park by Luke

I see people playing Frisbee on a long field.
I feel my suspension smoothing out bumps.
I hear the birds tweeting around me in the trees.
I smell the freshly bloomed flowers that let me know
spring is here.
It is amazing, but my ride in the park is coming to an
end as I speed down the final path.

Of Brakes by Ellie

The sight of my classmates on bikes brings
excitement to me.
The sounds of clicking gears,
The feel of handlebars is
familiar to me.
It is a feeling of happiness
then screaming and the whoosh
of brakes.



Bicycle Safety

“What About Stranger Danger?”

One of the concerns parents - and kids - have about riding bikes is riding safely, and that includes the idea of “Stranger Danger.” While this may be a concern, it is not as prevalent as some people think. Statistically, you are more likely to get struck by lightning than to be approached by a stranger with bad intentions. This is according to Jeff Mapes the author of [Pedaling Revolution](#). In 1999, a Centers for Disease Control survey was taken of parents and found that only 18% of parents were worried about crime (including kidnapping) occurring during a bike ride. We found from a survey we conducted at our school, 30% of parents in our school are worried about stranger danger. It was slightly higher for kids who were surveyed.

According to the US Department of Justice, 797,500 kids are reported missing each year. Of this big, scary number only 115 children are “kidnapped” by strangers who may intend harm. But there is safety in numbers. This has been demonstrated in bike trains in Portland and Eugene, Oregon, and in dozens of places around the world. A bike train is a “train” that picks kids up at different stops on its way to school.

Bike Trains are a great example of a high volume of cyclists riding and that is why a bike train is a good example of protection because of a large number of kids ride together under the watchful eye of adults. Because a bicycle is a vehicle, it can be used to ride back to the safety of parents and possibly call the police.

Bike trains don’t just keep kids safe, but will also help kids gain confidence for riding a bike. Kids develop trust on a bike because you stay safe and that will show adults that there isn’t really anything to worry about while riding a bike. While the possibility of abduction isn’t something to worry so much about, think instead about all the positives that biking provides.

“People Can Die Riding Bikes”

The good news is that bicycling accident resulting in deaths among children 16 years and younger have gone down 84% since 1980. Unfortunately, 677 people were still killed in bicycle accidents in 2011. There are always risks involved in any activity, but to say that bicycling is too dangerous is simply not true. According to the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, there were 32,885 fatalities in car accidents in the US in 2010.

“Fatal bicycle crashes are rare,” says Robin Stallings from Bike Texas. While they may still happen, we need to work to reduce the number of bicycle and car fatalities. Having bikes on the road also reduces traffic fatalities because it often slows people down and makes them realize that bikes are on the road and they need to watch out.

“Traffic fatalities in Portland involving bicycles have gone down 8% faster than the national fatality

rate,” according to Greg Raisman with the Portland Bureau of Transportation. Much of this has to do with a community-wide awareness of bicyclists.

In Austin, Texas, there is a program called defensive cycling. The way this program works is when cyclists get a ticket, instead of paying the fine you can take a class. This is a 3-hour course talking about bicycling road safety and rules of the road. You can only take the course once, after that you hopefully know the rules of the road and won't commit another crime. When bicyclists and motorists share the road, injuries and deaths can be reduced and educating ALL users is the first step.

“Bicyclists Don't Follow the Rules”

One of the excuses people use to dismiss bicycle culture is that neither cyclists nor motorists know or follow the rules of the road. Rochester's bike laws are pretty clear, but, not everyone knows them. For example, some of the laws include:

- ✓ children under the age of 12 have to ride on the sidewalk
- ✓ no one may ride a bicycle on sidewalks inside the Inner Loop
- ✓ bicyclists may not ride more than 2 side by side on the street

- ✓ bicyclists must keep at least one hand on the handlebars and both feet on the pedals.

Both motorists and bicyclists need to know the rules of the road. Across the country, there are many programs to educate motorists and cyclists on how to share the road. Many motorists get annoyed with cyclists when they're biking on the street and not following the road rules. The mayor of Chicago said he wanted to double fines for cyclists who break the law.

In Austin, Texas, one of the cities we visited, there are two programs: Traffic 101 and Road One. These are courses that teach motorists and bicyclists how to share the road. It's important to teach kids the rules of the road, as well. The Safe Routes to School program teaches lessons about bike safety in school.

In Rochester, the Rochester City Cycling Foundation offers a program called Ready Set Ride. RSR is a three hour program that helps new riders learn to bike better and to feel comfortable on their bikes.

This training is offered at local community centers and libraries. Children who take this course will learn NY State bicycling laws, riding techniques, bike maintenance, and how to ride on the streets of Rochester. Riders who participate will earn bike gear, too.

Both bicyclists and motorists will need to follow the rules of the road if we are to be known as a safe cycling city. We have a few programs in place, but really need cyclists to model good behavior so motorists will use greater common sense and cooperate with Rochester's growing cycling population.



What One Class Can Do: Creating Safe Routes to School

While in Portland, OR, GCCS sixth graders were invited to join a Bike Train with the Sabin Elementary School. A bike train is a chaperoned, organized ride to school that promotes safety and confidence in young riders. It follows a selected route, picking up bicyclists at various “stations” until it reaches school. It was such a powerful experience, we wanted to try it here in Rochester.

Our class formed a committee to select two routes for our bike train, and got parent volunteers to help escort our ride. We also had two police bicycle patrol escorts and had members from the Rochester Cycling Alliance to ride with us. Approximately one-third of the students at GCCS participated in the inaugural bike train. The GCCS Bike Train is one example of promoting safety while encouraging kids to ride their bikes to school!

“Get a bicycle. You will certainly not regret it, if you live.”

- Mark Twain



Reflections On Riding

My First Reverse Ride by Abigail

The river was waving,
The sun was setting,
And other bikers were weaving in and out of my
wobbly steering.
The handlebars were hot and sweaty,
The wind was in my hair,
And the rubber was squeaking,
water was splashing

AND YET
I was not crashing.

It was amazing!
I am proud
yet balanced
and at the same time,
Told that I can't

YET,
I can
And reverse psychology is my friend
On my first reverse ride.

Through Rochester by Savannah

As I swiftly ride through Rochester,
I feel a slight breeze
I hear birds chirp and
cars zoom.

As I swiftly ride through Rochester,
I see trees blowing in the wind.

As I swiftly ride through Rochester

Decimation by Spencer

I'm only paying attention
to the finish line.
As I rush by
the wind shoots by me,
thrashing my ears
into submission.
The taste of reward
decimates
all others in my mouth.
My sweaty hands clutch the handlebars
as I blast through
the finish line

Encouragement

“It’s Just Too Far to Bike”

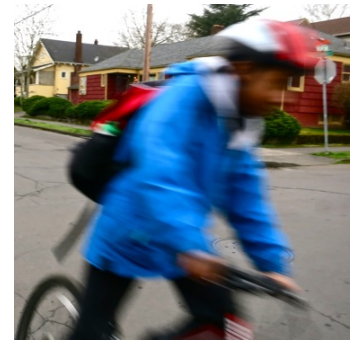
There are multiple benefits to bicycling. Unfortunately there are some misconceptions out there that cloud people’s minds to those benefits. For example, many people feel it’s just too exhausting to commute by bicycle.

It is true that some commuting distances are not practical for bikes. However, according to Bethany Young of The Messenger Post newspapers, the average commute in Rochester is 10.23 miles. This means that many commutes are less than ten miles and definitely bikeable. Others may have a commute over ten miles and bicycling on highways is neither safe nor legal. Tools like Map My Ride and Google Maps can show the safest bike paths to work. People can also combine bicycling with public transportation. All of the RGRTA buses have bike racks on the front of each bus and they are pretty easy to use.



“Whoever invented the bicycle deserves the thanks of humanity.”

- Lord Charles Beresford



Although it may not be possible to bike to work every day, it may be possible to do it every week or even every month. Along with the satisfaction of riding a bike, there are also plenty of health and physical benefits for trading in one ride in a car. Regular exercise helps maintain healthy blood pressure, builds muscle, and increases oxygen flow to the brain. According to ibike.com, your commute can become the best part of your day and you can be more productive.

A tip for getting started would be to practice biking and building up your stamina a little each day until you feel comfortable to start your commute. For example, Christian Edstrom commutes twice a week from his Westchester home by bike to his work 40 miles away in New York City. If he can do that twice a week, Rochesterians can try a ten-mile ride to work once or twice a month.

There are also environmental benefits to bicycle commuting; reducing the need to pump, ship and refine limited fossil fuels, and reducing greenhouse gasses by leaving the car at home. Still not convinced you could ride to work or school? A third option is an electric assist bike. On this type of bike, there is a motor to assist riding up big hills or when little push is needed. So, commuting may be work but most of us won’t be exhausted riding to work or school. After all, if we kids can ride to school on a weekly basis, adults can ride to work once a week! After all, bikes are not just for kids!

“Bikes Are Just Toys”

Some people mistakenly believe that bikes are just toys. Bikes are most certainly not toys! There are thousand dollar bikes out there with different kinds of uses. Did you know that in 2011, the U.S. bicycle industry was worth six billion dollars, including retail sales bikes and accessories? With that, bikes are most definitely not toys, but they're for not just for adults either.

During Rochester's 2013 Bike Week we counted a total of 26 events for all ages including kids and adults. However, a majority of these events were actually for adults, such as night rides and adult Critical Mass rides, so obviously not only kids ride bikes. Some adults use bikes as a mode of transportation, others use them as sport, but for most, the bike is used for recreation. Bikes can be used for recreation AND transportation. In many cities such as Madison, Wisconsin, some companies have a program where they will give a one-dollar bonus every time you bike to work.

In Portland, Oregon, the Chris King Company provides facilities like showers and lockers for their employees and secure parking for their bicycles. They give cafe credits to employees who bike and in 2011 gave away more than \$27,000 in free lunches! Each year in Portland, the Bicycle Transportation Authority sponsors the Bike Commute

Challenge. So far they have logged in 73,000 bike miles this year!

Maybe it's time for Rochester to get a Commuter Challenge started. If 11,000 people can *run* 3.5 miles in the JP Morgan Chase Corporate Challenge, can't they *ride* a bike 3.5 miles a few days a month for a Corporate Commuter Challenge?

If you're still not convinced that bikes are not just for kids, keep in mind that a League of American Bicyclists survey found that approximately 93 percent of adults between the ages of 25 and 54 can ride a bike! So, not only are bikes NOT just for kids, they most definitely ARE for adults!

“It's Too Hard to Get Started”

We believe a lot of people do not bike because they do not know the options available to them. During our Four Cities trips, we learned about many events that are held to encourage cycling. In Madison, they have an event called “Ride the Drive,” where they close down all of the main streets in downtown and only allow bikes and pedestrians on them. This promotes active transportation and helps people feel safer on the roads.

Another event, this one in Denver, CO, is called a cruiser ride. This is a family-friendly ride with a theme hosted every week. One of the

themes was “Where's Waldo?” and everyone dresses up like Waldo and rides the streets of Denver. There is a similar ride in Milwaukee, WI, called the “Santa Cycle Rampage,” where everyone dresses up in Santa costumes and rides during a day in December. At first, this event started with only a few people, but now over 700 people participate during this cold, winter month!

Closer to home, right here in Rochester, this year's Bike Week featured a Lilac Ride, Bike Polo, and even a Seersucker Ride, where bicyclists dressed up in old-fashioned clothing.

Another way to encourage biking is through a system called Bike Share. All Four Cities we visited either had or were about to launch a bike share program. You pay to borrow a bike from a kiosk in the city. You ride it around to visit friends, see the city, run errands, whatever you'd like, then return it to any kiosk in the city later that day. This is a really great way to encourage cycling because it gives people the experience without having to buy or maintain a bike.

Did you know that the League of American Bicyclists found that 27.3% of Americans bike on a regular basis? That's more than one in four people! The idea that people don't want to ride bicycles is not true; many just need a little encouragement.

What One Class Can Do: Encouraging Kids to Ride

This year, our class organized a Kidical Mass ride during Bike Week as a way of inspiring kids to get out and ride their bikes. We met at Schoen Place in Pittsford and rode along the Erie Canal towpath to Lock 32. To borrow the Kidical Mass motto, our ROC Kidical Mass ride showed the public that “kids are traffic, too!”

We also celebrated our own classroom Bike Day to celebrate our successes in building a bike-friendly culture. We rode to Cobb’s Hill Park and participated in a variety of bike-related activities, including crafting reflective bicycle poetry that can be found in this report.

“It never gets easier, you just go faster.”

- Greg LeMond



Rochester Kidical Mass
Saturday, May 18th, 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm
Erie Canal Ride, 4.2 mi

Reflections On Riding

Untitled by Katie

I have the freedom;
I stand on my pedals and feel as if
I am a bird.
I can see everyone's helmet ahead of me.
I am in the back, looking ahead at the line of bikes.
The wind rushes on my face, my hands feel sweaty
to prove I have conquered the ride of bike day.

Flight of the Bicycle by Sam

The cool pavement is spread out in front of me,
The trees and houses speeding by.
My hands clutch firm the handlebars.
I switch up a gear and
Hear the wind whipping by, its voice
Blocking out all other sound.

The faint smell of rubber
And the stronger scent of food carts fill my nose
As I pass.

My mouth is dry, but I do not care.
I am riding a bicycle.
I am flying.

Riding by Maggie

Riding my bike through the streets of Rochester
feeling comfortable
seeing my friends and classmates riding
pedestrians walking
cars driving

Riding my bike through the streets of Rochester
feeling the rubber handlebar grips
hearing brakes squeaking
watching kids skidding
listening to kids talking
feeling happy.

Cherry Creek by Jack

Bikers whiz by me
My feet touch the pedals
All my force is used to turn the wheel
Around one more time
I smell flowers starting to bloom
I smell dirt
And hear the rushing water
I glance away from the road
And see the sparkling waters of Cherry Creek.

Conclusion



What we have shared in this report and what we have accomplished over this year is just the beginning. Although this is our last year at Genesee Community Charter School, we are leaving our legacy behind and setting off to spread the word to our new schools around Rochester about the power and benefits of bicycling.

We expect that next year, the events and initiatives we have started will be taken to the next level, not only at GCCS, but in the Rochester community as well. We have big dreams, but we believe Rochester could be like the Four Cities we visited.

With a little work, we can have the awareness and education programs of Madison, WI. With a little more investment, we can have the infrastructure of Portland, OR. With a little more effort, we can have the safety programs of Austin, TX. With a little more will, we can have the encouragement programs of Denver, CO.

If we all work together to promote bicycling here in Rochester, our vision will become reality and we'll all ride on together.

“I want to ride my bicycle, I want to ride my bike. I want to ride my bicycle, I want to ride it where I like.”
- Queen

As we shared earlier, the GCCS sixth grade class chooses a “hot topic” to study during the course of the year. These topics, while locally focused, often have national or international connections, and are meant to start a conversation about revitalization or raising awareness in our community.

This tradition started in 2006 with the first class of GCCS sixth graders. They studied the merits of the Grasso-Zimmer Plan to re-water the Erie Canal bed in downtown Rochester. The class divided into four groups and traveled to four cities to examine regional canals and how the community was affected. Their research reawakened the possibility of having the Erie Canal be a central part of a revitalized downtown. Their work was presented to the Mayor of Rochester

Rochester, City Council Members, and community stakeholders. Students from the class were also invited to deliver the keynote address at Expeditionary Learning’s National Conference.

Since that first year, seven other classes have embraced projects that have ranged from public art to health exhibits for local museums to Skatepark advocacy. In each case, students have had to travel to meet with experts, conduct original research, synthesize their learning, present their findings through a public presentation, and produce a written component to share with stakeholders. It is work done with pride and purpose. We hope that you will share this report with others to spread the work of the GCCS Sixth Grade Class of 2013.

About GCCS Sixth Grade

The Genesee Community Charter School
Sixth Grade Class of 2013

Abigail

Adriana

Aidan

Arianna

Bryce

Claire

Aidan “Cooper”

Ellie

Fiona

Grace

Graham

Isaiah

Jack

Jade

Jordan

Katie

Luke

Maggie

Mikayla

Myanna

Noah

Philip

Sam

Savannah

Tessa

Spencer

Will

Shannon Hillman, Chris Dolgos and Barb Schild, Sixth Grade Teaching Team

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We would also like to recognize the time and efforts of the dozens of experts in Madison and Milwaukee, WI, Denver and Boulder, CO, Austin, TX, and Portland, OR, for opening our eyes to the possibilities of a rich and diverse bicycle culture back at home.

To our sixth grade parents, who served as chaperons, bicycle experts and repairmen, public speaking coaches, and Bike Week participants, thank you for your unwavering support of our activities and adventures this year!

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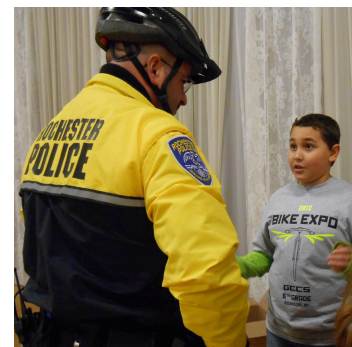
Stallings, Robin. Personal interview at Bike Texas, Austin, TX. 11 March 2013.

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Bill Griesar, p. 15, 18

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