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Memorandum

Date: February 1, 2018
To: Nancy Adams, City of Santa Rosa
From: Jeff Knowles, Alta Planning + Design
Re: **Santa Rosa Bicycle Friendly Community Audit – Draft Report**

Introduction

The City of Santa Rosa is currently a Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC), as declared by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB). The City last applied in fall 2015 and will need to reapply by fall 2019 to maintain a BFC designation. Since 2015, the City has done considerable work to improve the bicycle network and culture in Santa Rosa. However, because the LAB assigns rankings based on other cities who apply during the same time frame, Santa Rosa will need to do more to be competitive and attain a Silver-level designation or higher. This memo provides short-term and longer-term strategies Santa Rosa can do to become a more bicycle-friendly community and to be recognized as such.

Current Status

The graphic below outlines where Santa Rosa stands compared to cities with higher rankings.

SANTA ROSA					
BICYCLE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY STATUS					
Bronze		Silver	Gold	Platinum	Diamond
🏆 KEY OUTCOMES					
✖	Fatalities	per 10k daily commuters	10.2		0.2
✖	Crashes	per 10k daily commuters	774		50
✖	Ridership	percent of people commuting by bicycle	1.0%		20%
🛡️ ENFORCEMENT					
✔	Bicycle-Friendly Laws			VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT
✔	Law Enforcement Liaison				YES
🔍 EVALUATION					
✖	Bicycle Program Staff	Position Vacant			1 PER 10K CITIZENS
✔	Bicycle Plan	current and being implemented			YES
🔧 ENGINEERING					
✔	Arterial Streets	with bike lanes			90%
⚖	Bicycle Network	to Road Network Mileage	33%		70%
✔	Bike Access	to Public Transportation		VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT
🎓 EDUCATION					
⚖	School Education	% of schools with offering bike training	26-50%		80%
✔	Adult Bike Education	annual offerings			MONTHLY
✔	Bike Education Outreach			VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT
👤 ENCOURAGEMENT					
✔	Active Bike Clubs and Events				YES
✔	Bike Month and Bike to Work Events				EXCELLENT
✔	Active Bicycle Advisory Committee			YES	YES
✔	Active Advocacy Group			YES	YES
✔	Recreational Facilities			YES	YES

Santa Rosa excels in several areas including having a Bicycle Plan, liaison with the Santa Rosa Police Department, offering monthly adult bicycle education through the Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition, and celebrating May is Bike Month. However, these efforts are not reflected in what the LAB refers to as “Key Outcomes” or areas that quickly quantify how friendly a community is toward bicycling. These Key Outcomes are listed below, with more details in the following sections.

Fatalities

Santa Rosa experiences 10.2 fatalities for every 10,000 bicycle commuters. On average, a Bronze BFC has closer to four with Diamond-level communities falling to 0.2 fatalities per 10,000 bicycle commuters. In order to become more competitive, Santa Rosa will need to significantly reduce this rate. This can be done by:

- Upgrading bicycle facilities
- Adopting a Vision Zero plan or policy
- Installing protected intersections

Crashes

With 774 crashes per 10,000 bicycle commuters, Santa Rosa is significantly behind comparable communities. Santa Rosa should aim to cut that rate by 50 percent to be considered average for Bronze-level communities. Silver-level communities typically experience about 180 crashes per 10,000 bike commuters whereas Diamond communities see about 50. Santa Rosa can reduce this rate by:

- Upgrading bicycle facilities
- Adopting a Vision Zero plan or policy
- Installing protected intersections
- Upgrading trail crossings
- Expanding the Safe Routes to School Program

Ridership

About one percent of commuters do so by bicycle. This is fairly consistent with other Bronze-level communities, but below the 3.5 percent for Silver-level and 5.5 percent for Gold. Diamond communities see a 20 percent bicycle mode share. Santa Rosa can increase its mode share by:

- Hiring a Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
- Developing a bike rack program
- Expanding and upgrading bicycle facility network
- Expanding the Safe Routes to School Program
- Upgrading trail crossings
- Installing protected intersections

All of these recommendations to improve the Key Outcomes are further explained in the following sections.

Short-Term Action Items

1. Hire a Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator

The LAB recognizes the value in having one or more staff members who work on bicycle and pedestrian projects and program coordination full time. This person ensures that all planning, public works, and transportation projects account for bicyclists and incorporate bicycle facilities in the designs. They can also write grant applications to fund projects and programs and serve as the city liaison for all bicycle and pedestrian coordination with the public and neighboring jurisdictions.

If funding is not available to create a new position, an existing staff member can be shifted into the Coordinator position. Additionally, the City can hire interns to work on bicycle and pedestrian projects until a suitable full-time staff member can be found.

Some organizations and foundations will fund staff member salaries, fellowships, or contractor salaries for a set period of time. The City should apply for grants from one or more of these foundations.

2. Develop a Bike Rack Program

Bike Rack programs coordinate and streamline bike rack installations. The program could be managed by an intern who could work with staff and business owners to install bike racks and bike corrals citywide. This also ensures bike racks are properly installed as to not block sidewalks while still being usable for bicyclists.

Currently, there are no bike corrals installed in Santa Rosa. The City should install bike corrals in high-traffic locations such as in vehicle parking spots on the corners of 4th and 5th Streets in downtown. This not only sends a statement that secure bike parking is important to the city and community members, but bike corrals increase visibility at intersections for all roadway users. An increase in visibility should reduce the risk of a collision in these locations.

The city could also develop customized bike racks. These racks can serve as a “brand,” highlighting the Santa Rosa identity as a bicycle-friendly community and can double as art features.

3. Expand the Bicycle Network

Santa Rosa has put in considerable effort to expand bicycle network, both on- and off-street. However, the miles of bike facilities compared to the overall road network is low. Many streets are still without bike facilities and many roadways and trails citywide have gaps. For example, Dutton Avenue has bike lanes installed on some segments, but not others and the SMART Trail does not connect to the Downtown Santa Rosa SMART Station. Closing these gaps creates a complete network, incentivizing more bicycle riders. Using a bicycle facility selection tool, such as those provided by The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), will help determine which facility is most appropriate depending on vehicle speeds and volumes.

One way to create space on existing streets for bicycle facilities is to reduce the width for vehicle travel lanes. NACTO recommends a ten-foot travel lane for urban areas and 11-foot travel lanes for truck routes.¹ Many vehicle lanes in Santa Rosa are over 12 feet. Reducing this width provides opportunity to install bike facilities.

4. Upgrade Existing Bike Lanes

About 90 percent of arterials in Santa Rosa have bike lanes installed. Many of these facilities are small, four-foot bike lanes on 35 to 40 mph roadways, which can be uncomfortable for the average rider. Existing bicycle lanes could be upgraded to buffered bike lanes or separated bikeways by removing on-street parking or narrowing vehicle lane widths. These lower stress facilities can increase comfort for more hesitant bicycle riders, such as women and children, because they are further or physically separated from vehicle traffic. This is especially impactful on streets with high vehicle speeds where only the most fearless riders may currently feel confident.

5. Expand Safe Routes to School Program

Sonoma County and Santa Rosa have significantly expanded the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program over time, with 26 Santa Rosa schools enrolled in the 2017-2018 school year. Santa Rosa should continue to work to expand bicycle-safety education and events to all schools. The City could partner with the school districts and

¹ <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/street-design-elements/lane-width/>.

encourage them to start small with events such as the annual International Walk and Roll to School Day or by developing Suggested Routes to School Maps.

Suggested Routes to School Maps, also called Walk and Roll Maps, provide guardians with walking and bicycling routes to school by pointing out locations of crossing guards, off-street paths, traffic signals, and other safety features that would make walking or riding a bike to school feel more comfortable. The maps typically contain safety tips such as using hand signals and how-to information such as how to properly fit a helmet. Lastly, the maps can help inform the City of problem locations or gaps in the bicycle and pedestrian networks.

6. Vision Zero

The City is currently developing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. A Vision Zero component should be included in this Plan. Vision Zero is the idea that no loss of life on a roadway is acceptable and all serious injuries and fatalities are preventable through roadway design and education. The Plan should include a Vision Zero policy or goal and can include an entire chapter devoted to the topic.

Long-Term Action Items

1. Upgrade Trail Crossings

Santa Rosa has several miles of trails that provide excellent connections to destinations citywide. Many of these trails cross the roadway network at-grade and can be challenging to navigate for bicyclists. For example, many of these crossings have bollards or fencing blocking direct access to the trail, causing the bicyclist to swerve or dismount. Removing these obstructions, adding ramps and high-visibility crosswalks, and installing more bike signals in appropriate locations provide riders with a more seamless and less stressful ride.

2. Install Protected Intersections

As Santa Rosa expands its bicycle network, many of these roadways with bike facilities will intersect. Intersections are often considered the most stressful component of riding a bicycle. Santa Rosa can redesign major bikeway intersections into “protected intersections” with corner safety islands that provide a protected waiting space for bicyclists. This treatment has been installed in several cities across the nation and can be installed at intersections with separated bikeways or bike lanes alike.