

KENTON CONNECTS PUBLIC COMMENTS REPORT



Introduction

Direction 2030: Your Voice. Your Choice. established a set of county-wide goals through an extensive public input process and relied heavily on public participation. Using Direction 2030 as a guide, the Kenton Connects study was developed with extensive input from the public. Public input provided guidance on key elements of the study and provided direction for the study's advisory committee.

There were three opportunities for the public to participate throughout the course of the study. These opportunities were designed for participants to comment and provide insight on important bicycle and pedestrian issues and to give feedback on the concepts within the plan. Additionally, the Kenton Connects website provided a chance to sign up for the Kenton Connects email list to stay up to date on the status of the study. As with all plans, staff was available to answer the public's questions and gather comments throughout the entire study process.

The first two public input opportunities were surveys designed to gather information about existing bicycle and pedestrian conditions in Kenton County. The third was a public open house where participants could provide feedback about recommendations and ideas resulting from the study.

The feedback gathered from all three input opportunities was presented to the Advisory Committee for their consideration and used to help guide the study. Figure 1 below provides a better understanding of the input process.

Kenton Connects Survey

The Kenton Connects Survey was the first opportunity to provide input for the study. It was designed to gather input about existing bicycle and pedestrian conditions and to identify issues important to the citizens of Kenton County. It opened on July 1, 2017 and was available on the Kenton Connects website through October 2017 and took 5-10 minutes to complete. The survey was promoted in conjunction with the Paula Nye Grant public service announcements, on the Spectrum television and digital media network, social media, and by various communities and organizations in Kenton County. In total, there were 424 surveys submitted. Four common themes arose regarding biking and walking which should be noted; Connectivity, Safety, Access, and Convenience. These themes, derived from public input, served as the foundation of the study and carried through to the plan's research and final recommendations.

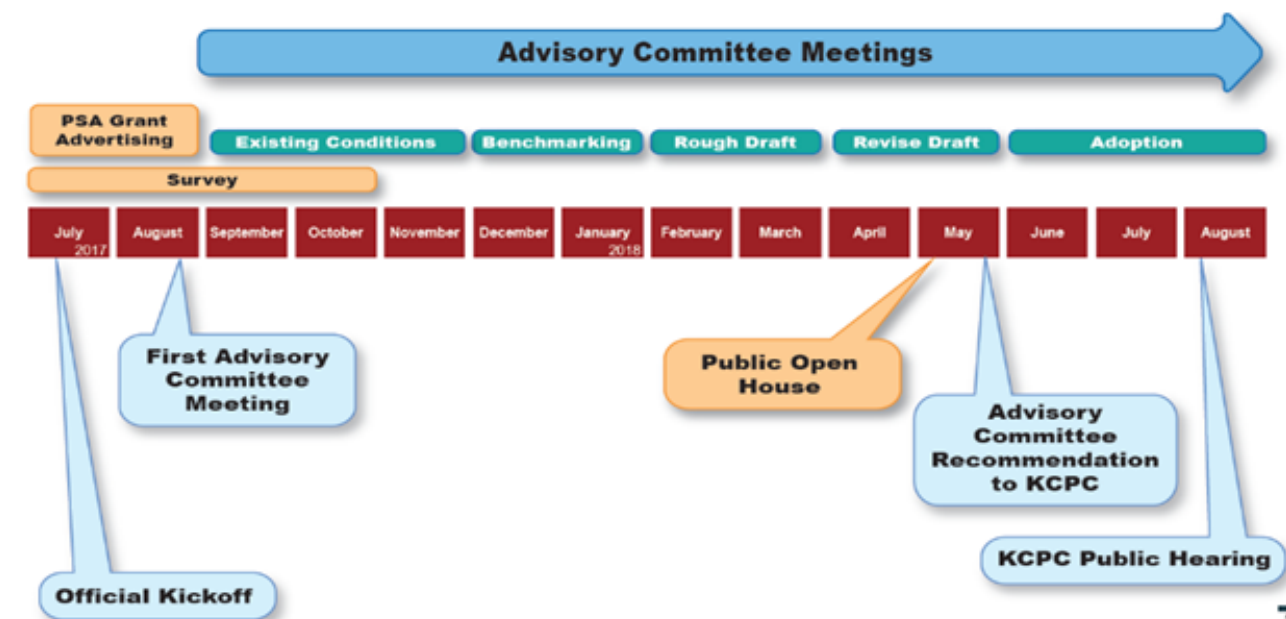


Figure 1: Kenton Connects Timeline



Figure 2: Kenton Connects Survey

Connectivity

Responses from the survey indicated that the lack of connectivity in a cohesive biking and walking system was problematic. The survey contained questions about route planning and barriers to biking and walking. Most respondents (61%) indicated that the absence of bike facilities prevented them from biking more often.

When asked to rank which bicycle recommendations would be most beneficial to Kenton County, having bicycle and pedestrian paths that connect local neighborhoods to destinations was ranked number one. The second most frequently mentioned concern was increasing bike infrastructure along streets and roadways.

For bicycling, respondents ranked having paths and trails that connect local neighborhoods to other destinations as first and increasing sidewalks in commercial and business areas as third. The desire to improve existing infrastructure and connectivity was clear in the results of the survey.

Safety

The survey also contained questions about perceptions of safety when biking and walking. The survey questions explored walking and biking in different scenarios such as along a four-lane road, two-lane road, residential neighborhood, on a multi-use path or trail, on the street, or on the sidewalk. The results indicate that people felt safer when the biking or walking facility was more separated from vehicle traffic. Overwhelmingly, the feeling of safety was highest when walking or biking on a multi-use trail, which is completely separated from vehicular traf-

fic. Respondents also felt safe within their residential neighborhood where there is little to no vehicle traffic.

When asked what prevented them from biking more often, 39% of respondents indicated they did not feel safe on the existing bike facilities. When asked what prevented respondents from walking more, safety at intersection crossings was the second highest response at 26%. Continuing to make a safe biking and walking environment in Kenton County is a clear desire reflected in the survey results.

Access

Results from the Kenton Connects survey indicate that having adequate access to biking and walking facilities is an aspect that impacts people's ability to use these modes of transportation. When asked what prevent them from biking and walking more, often the highest response for bicycling was the lack of bicycle facilities and the highest response for walking was uneven or missing sidewalks. Comments received in the survey stated that many people go to Ohio or outside of Kenton County to bicycle because the trails and paths are more accessible and connected. Improved access to existing biking and walking facilities and to destination places was identified in the results of the survey as an important issue.

Convenience

Another notable topic area indicated by the survey was convenience. The idea of convenience deals with how conducive existing facilities are to walking and biking in Kenton County. Responses dealing with convenience include the lack of biking and walking facilities, no facilities close to where people live,

and limited access to places people want to visit. The survey results show that when walking or running, the proximity to where people live was the second highest factor that impacts route planning. Access to use bicycle and pedestrian facilities conveniently and make walking and biking easier was an important issue supported in the results of the survey.

Kenton Connects High School Survey

To broaden the reach of the survey and to obtain an understanding of bicycle and pedestrian issues from a younger demographic, a brief survey was administered to high school students. The survey was given at the Kenton County Academies of Innovation and Technology as part of their GIS Day activities on November 17, 2017 and was available to all students during the event. The Kenton Connects Advisory Committee felt that gaining a better understanding of how students ride or walk and their thoughts on bicycle and pedestrian safety would provide insight into important active transportation issues. In total, 59 student surveys were submitted.

Questions administered as part of the student survey were crafted to gain a better understanding of how often students bicycle and walk, how often they wear a bicycle helmet, what prevents them from biking and walking more often, and where they learn about bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Of the respondents, 76% indicated they never or rarely wore a helmet when they rode a bicycle. The survey results also show that 69% of respondents learned bicycle and pedestrian safety from their parents or family members. Finally, only 10% of respondents walk or bicycle to school, however, they would consider walking or biking for transportation more often if the distance wasn't too far, there were more bike lanes, and/or they felt safe when walking or biking. The results of the Kenton Connects High School Survey were taken into consideration in conjunction with the Kenton Connects Survey and helped provide guidance for the remainder of the study.

Kenton Connects Public Open House

The Kenton Connects Public Open House was held on May 16, 2018 at Dixie Heights High School. Draft recommendation highlights, existing conditions analysis, and next steps information were displayed on boards for the public to view. As part of the open house, attendees were asked to provide comments and input about the presented recommendations. To gather input, comment cards were given to each attendee as they entered the open house. Questions were intended to determine participants thoughts

on the four key recommendation areas: connectivity, safety, education, and usership. Responses concerning the existing conditions research were also included. In total, 22 comment cards were returned.



Figure 1: Kenton Connects Public Open House

Results regarding the existing conditions information indicate that attendees did not think the existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities were connected, accessible, or adequate. According to the survey, 86% of people stated that if existing infrastructure was better connected and more accessible they would ride and walk more often. Furthermore, 77% of respondents did not think there was adequate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in Kenton County.

Additional open-ended comments about existing conditions state that many people go to Ohio to ride trails and existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities are nearly nonexistent.

Results from the open house also show that connectivity within the existing system is an important issue. Responses from the open house indicate that 85% of attendees support better connected sidewalks and paths that link places they want to visit and 76% support better connections to places of employment. Another important component was usership and recommendations to focus improvements where they would be most impactful. Responses indicate that 80% of attendees agree with the idea of requiring bicycle parking at shopping centers and places of employment and 85% believe adding bicycle lanes will improve accessibility.

Safety and education were other important topics presented at the open house and specifically addressed on the comment cards. The results show that 71% of respondents believe that intersection improvements in high bicycle and pedestrian crash areas will reduce injuries. The results also show that 90% of respondents support programs that teach the

rules of the road and support walking and biking education in schools.

Attendees were given the opportunity to provide additional ideas to be considered as part of the recommendations. Those comments include improving bicycle and pedestrian signage, incorporating sharrows, improved intersection design, phased improvements, and promotion of biking and walking to show they are legitimate modes of transportation. Other comments received include creating paths that connect the Ohio River to other communities such as Fort Wright and Erlanger and showing the benefits when a person bikes or walks versus driving a personal vehicle.

The comments and results received from the Kenton Connects Open House were given to the advisory committee for consideration when working toward finalizing the recommendations.

Conclusion

The results from the two surveys and the public open house indicate a desire from the public for improved safety, connectivity, and accessibility for biking and walking in Kenton County. The surveys and open house support the idea for improved bicycle and pedestrian transportation and help provide a basis for the study's recommendations. Direction 2030 also identifies the need to an updated bicycle and pedestrian plan and was the impetus for this study.

The public input opportunities provided throughout this study gave Kenton County citizens an opportunity to share their thoughts about bicycle and pedestrian related issues in Kenton County. The comments and input received from the public throughout the entire study process guided the development of the plan. The advisory committee took into consideration the comments and results from the public input sessions when developing the final recommendations.