

# BIKE THRU BURQUE SURVEY REPORT 2020

City of Albuquerque Annual Bike to Work Day Event



Prepared by the  
Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization



January 2021



## INTRO & BACKGROUND

Bike to Work Day (BTWD) is an event that occurs each year in the City of Albuquerque and greater Albuquerque area. It is planned and organized by the City of Albuquerque with assistance from and in coordination with other organizations and stakeholders including the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG), Bernalillo County, ABQ Ride, BikeABQ and others. The event is part of the National Bike Month campaign which occurs every year during the month of May. The event planned for 2020 was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but was re-imagined as a virtual, week-long event that was held in September 2020 (20<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>).

A website for the event was developed ([bikethruburque.com](http://bikethruburque.com)) and included a link to a survey that asked participants various questions related to bicycle riding and conditions in the City of Albuquerque. This year's survey also included questions related to bicycle usage during the pandemic. Because of the virtual nature of the event, paper surveys were not distributed at bicycle stop locations as is usually done, and all survey responses were completed online (see Appendix A for the survey instrument).

The survey had 895 participants, which was similar to previous years. This report summarizes those responses.

YEAR	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
2020	895
2019	1,012
2018	978
2017	822
2016	136

In addition, there were hundreds of write-in responses provided by survey respondents. These are difficult to summarize but can be accessed and viewed upon request (email requests to [tcok@mrcog-nn.gov](mailto:tcok@mrcog-nn.gov)). The write-in responses offer additional insight into the community's thoughts on bicycling.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to the survey. The survey provides helpful data for planners, advocates, and decision makers who help develop and shape the bicycle network in the City of Albuquerque, which also helps improve bicycling conditions in the broader metro region.



## **PURPOSE**

For years, the annual Bike to Work Day event has provided a great opportunity to promote a survey that is used to help gauge the bicycling public's thoughts on bicycling in the City. This year's event, even with the virtual-only format, was no exception.

This survey has been used in past years to analyze public perceptions of Albuquerque's bicycle-friendliness. It helps identify bicyclists' needs and gather general information about bicycling in the greater Albuquerque area. Local governments and advocacy organizations can use this information to help understand how to make Albuquerque a more bicycle-friendly community. The survey can also be used by the City of Albuquerque when they apply for the League of American Bicyclists Bicycle Friendly Award, which occurs every four years. The League of American Bicyclists (LAB) is an organization that advocates for bicycle-friendly policies and practices across the United States. They work to define best practices and provide a competitive program in which states, communities, businesses, and universities can apply to be part of Bicycle Friendly America. It's not only a ranking in bicycle-friendliness, but it also provides standards, can raise expectations of what can enable a bicycle friendly community, and can serve as a roadmap for further improvements. The scoring is based on five categories: engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation and planning. Applicants are then ranked for one of the five levels: diamond, platinum, gold, silver, or bronze. In 2020, the City of Albuquerque was elevated to the Silver level, and had previously been ranked at the Bronze level.

Additionally, collecting this data annually at Bike to Work Day events can serve as a yardstick and snapshot in time to enable local governments and advocacy organizations to assess changing perceptions of bicycling. It helps better understand which investments may be most effective at encouraging more bicycling, and it creates a better understanding of bicycling preferences and gaps. This report provides the results from the 2020 virtual event that occurred on September 20th-26th, 2020 in the greater Albuquerque area.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO) developed the 2020 Bike to Work Day Survey in coordination with the City of Albuquerque's Department of Municipal Development. Questions were derived from previous Bike to Work Day surveys and also from input from the Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's Active Transportation Committee and the Bike Thru Burque event planning team. There were 19 questions on the survey. The survey was voluntary and anonymous and was intended to provide information about bicycling perceptions in Albuquerque. The survey was developed on Survey Monkey, an online survey making tool. See Appendix A for a copy of the survey instrument.

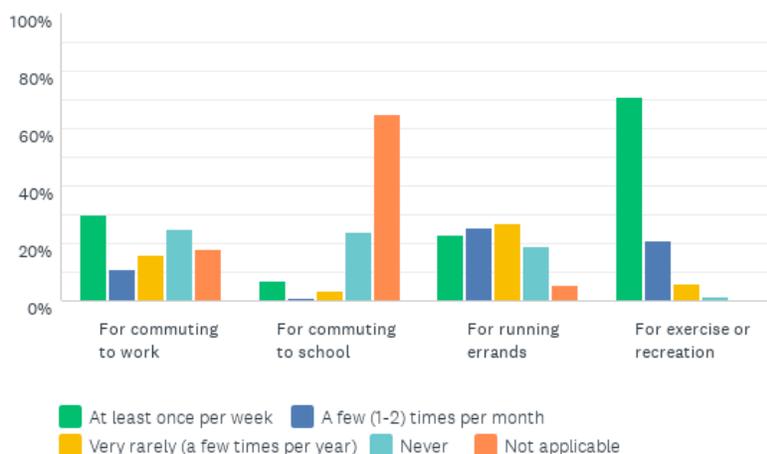
The survey was made available on the Bike Thru Burque website ([bikethurburque.com](http://bikethurburque.com)) from Sept. 1-Oct. 1. Paper copies were offered as available upon request, but no requests were received. The survey was publicized in various newsletters, shared on social media, and promoted on the Bike Thru Burque website. Although in 2020, the event was titled "Bike Thru Burque," for the purposes of this report, the survey is referred to as the Bike to Work Day survey.

# RESULTS

Topics in the 2020 Bike to Work Day survey included bicycle use, barriers to bicycling and desired improvements, bicycling during the COVID-19 pandemic, participation in Bike to Work events, and demographics.

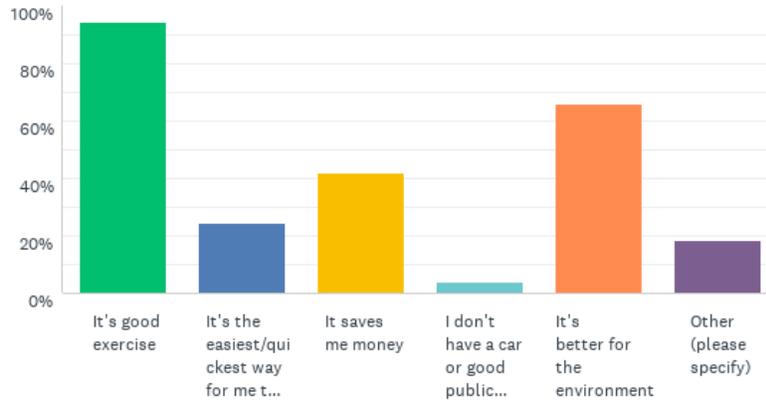
The first section of the survey included general questions on people’s use of bicycles for travel and their thoughts on bicycling conditions in the City.

## Q1 In general, how often do you bicycle for these trip purposes?



Question 1 revealed that exercise (or recreation) was the main purpose for respondents to take bicycling trips at least once a week (71%). Almost 30% of respondents reported bicycling to work at least once a week. About 27% reported bicycling to work a few times per month and very rarely, and nearly 25% reported never bicycling to work. While those percentages might seem low for a Bike to Work Day event, this may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting decrease in commute trips due to people working from home or becoming unemployed. In response to the pandemic, the 2020 event shifted to a “Just get out and Ride” theme, and likely attracted a broader range of participants. Looking at responses for commuting to school, the event does not seem to attract the participation of people who bicycle to school or who are students or accompany a student to school by bicycle. As for running errands by bicycle, most respondents reported doing that very rarely. However, combined responses for people who bicycle to run errands at least once per week, a few times month, and very rarely was much greater (75%) than people who reported never running errands by bicycle (19%).

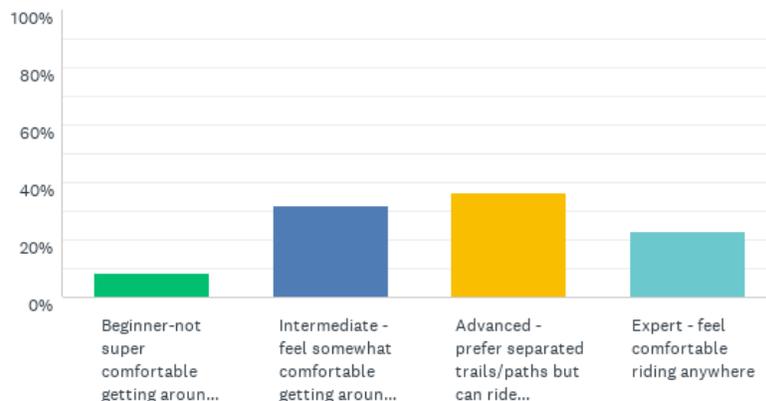
## Q2 Why do you use your bike for trips? (Mark all that apply)



Top reasons cited for respondents using their bikes to make trips were for exercise (95%), environmental reasons (66%), and for economic reasons (saves money) at 42%. Only 4% of respondents reported that they ride their bike because they don't have a car or good transit options, indicating that most respondents in this survey choose to ride their bicycles and don't do so out of necessity.

Most respondents (37%) reported that they are advanced riders. Only 8% described their experience level as beginner. This would be a good group to try to target for future events, if possible, if an event goal is to attract more people to bicycling for transportation purposes.

## Q3 How would you describe your experience as a bicycle rider?

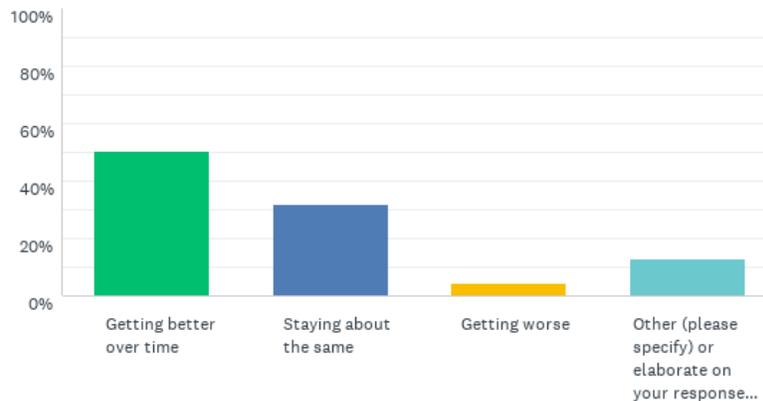


Most people reported that they believe bicycling conditions in the community are getting better over time (50%) compared to about 32% who felt conditions are staying about the same. Only 5% felt they are getting worse. However, the percentage reporting that conditions are getting better is lower than in previous years. A comparison of responses to this same question from past years is shown in the table below:

YEAR	CONDITIONS	PERCENTAGE
2020	Getting Better	51%
2018	Getting Better	74%
2017	Getting Better	74%
2020	Getting Worse	5%
2018	Getting Worse	4%
2017	Getting Worse	4%
2020	Staying the Same	32%
2018	Staying the Same	17%
2017	Staying the Same	16%

*Note: Survey question not asked in 2019 survey*

#### Q4 Do you feel that bicycling conditions in this community are:



The next set of questions examined perceived barriers to bicycling and desired improvements. Respondents reported that feeling unsafe riding around vehicles was their main difficulty riding their bike in the community. A lack of good routes that connect people to where they want to go was the other top barrier. Sixteen percent of respondents reported that they do not have any difficulties riding their bike around their community.

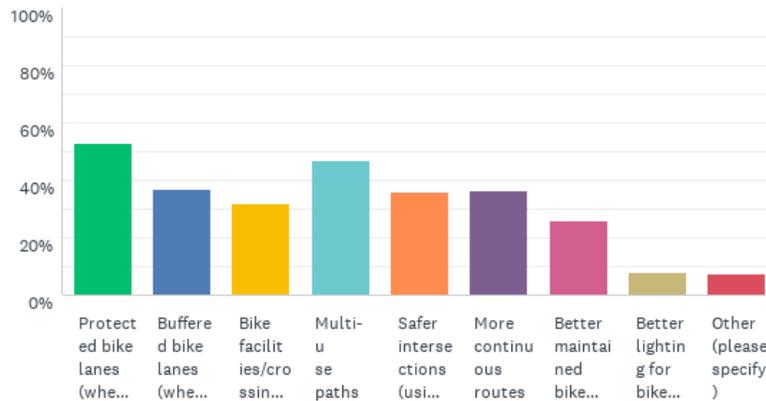
Q5 What are the main difficulties, if any, you find for riding your bike in your community?  
(Mark all that apply)



‘Protected bicycle lanes’ was the top choice selected for type of bicycle infrastructure and facilities people would like to see more of (53%) followed by buffered bicycle lanes (37%). ‘Protected bicycle lanes’ was also the top choice selected from respondents in the 2019 Bike to Work Day survey. Respondents would also like to see more multi-use paths separated from motorists such as the Bosque Trail (47%). The City (and greater metro area) currently has a small amount of protected bicycle facilities although such facilities are becoming increasingly popular in many metro areas around the country and are encouraged by organizations such as NACTO for their ability to attract riders who are interested in bicycling but not comfortable riding in mixed traffic<sup>1</sup>. Protected bicycle lanes can attract more riders of all ages and abilities and provide better bicycle network connectivity these same riders. Downsides are that intersection design can be tricky and the facilities can be difficult to design along corridors with many curb cuts or driveways. NACTO does recommend their implementation in places where speeds are greater than 25 miles per hour.

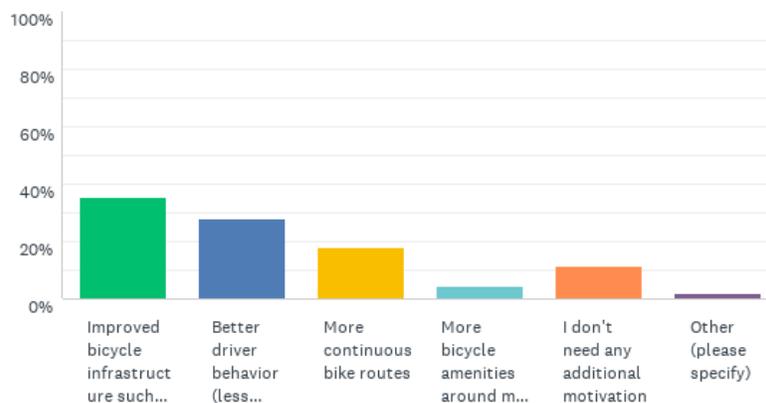
<sup>1</sup> <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/designing-ages-abilities-new/>

**Q6 What bicycle infrastructure and facilities would you like to see more of? Please select up to 3 choices.**



Improved bicycle infrastructure such as protected bicycle lanes and buffered bicycle lanes were the top reported choice that would most motivate respondents to bicycle more followed by better driver behavior. Bicycle infrastructure can be addressed through engineering while better driver behavior can be addressed through education and enforcement.

**Q7 What would most motivate you to ride your bike more?**

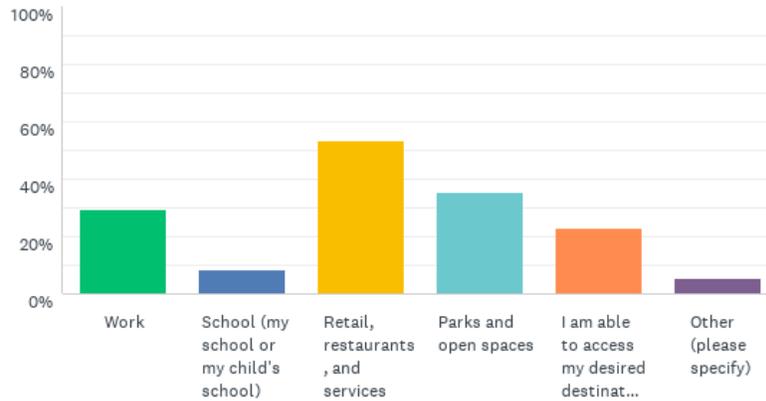


Responses to Question 8 indicate that people may have more difficulty accessing places like retail, restaurants, and services by bicycle. Parks and open spaces were also cited as top places people would like better access to by bicycle. Efforts such as Safe Routes to Parks<sup>2</sup> as well as better transit connections to recreation and open spaces could help improve bicycle access to such places. Working to provide improved access for underserved communities to these places would be especially important<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/saferoutestoparks>

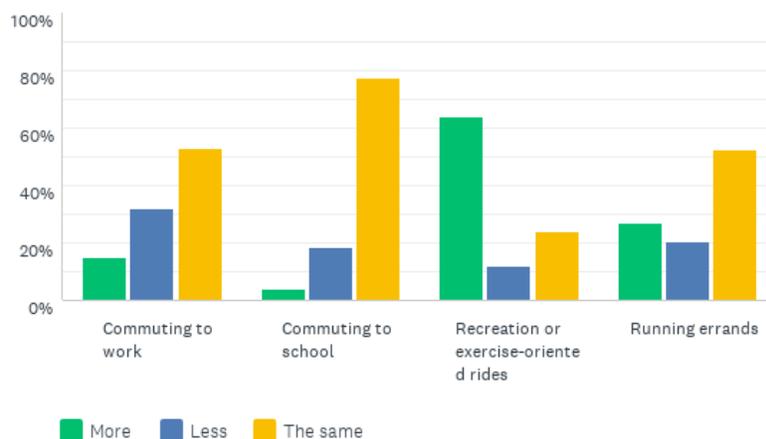
<sup>3</sup> [Chapter 9 of Connections 2040 MTP](#) explores the issue of pedestrian access to open spaces for environmental justice and non-environmental justice communities and also access to transit for these communities. Also, the Wilderness Society released a report in 2020 about equitable transit access to open space and parks in [Albuquerque, Next Stop: Equitable Access](#).

**Q8 What types of places do you wish you could access more easily by bicycle? (Mark all that apply)**



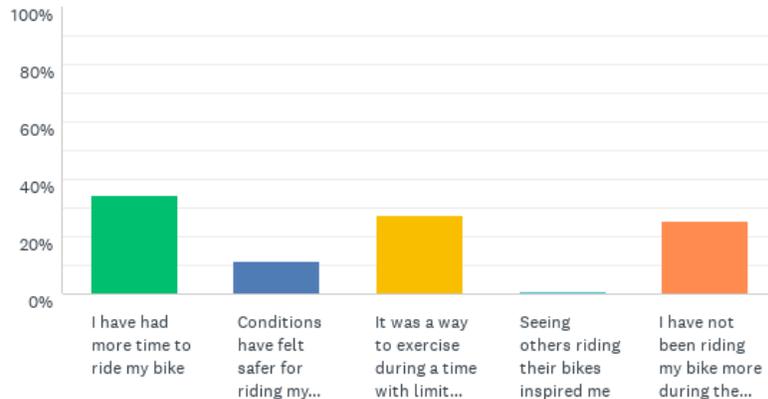
The next section of the survey asked questions that were directed to bicycling riding during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many areas in the country and around the world reported increases in walking and bicycling during the pandemic. Responses to the Bike to Work Day survey indicate that the same was true in the City of Albuquerque and that changes in people’s personal travel behaviors occurred during this time. Respondents reported that they did ride their bicycles more for exercise or recreation during the pandemic but less for commuting to work and school, as would be expected because many people were laid off or required to work from home during the pandemic. More people reported running errands by bicycle than running less errands by bicycle, although the most respondents said they ran the same amount of errands by bicycle during the pandemic. Nevertheless, the fact that more people ran errands by bicycle is a hopeful finding that could potentially lead to more non-work trips being completed by bicycle in the future.

**Q9 Have you been doing more, less, or the same amount of the following types of trips by bike during the COVID-19 pandemic?**



The main reason respondents rode their bicycles more during the pandemic, if they did report that they did indeed ride their bicycles more during the pandemic, was because they had more time (34%). Exercise was the second most reason listed (27%), and a similar percentage of people reported that they had not been riding their bicycles more during the pandemic (26%).

**Q10 If you have been riding your bike more during the COVID-19 pandemic, what would you say is the main reason for this?**

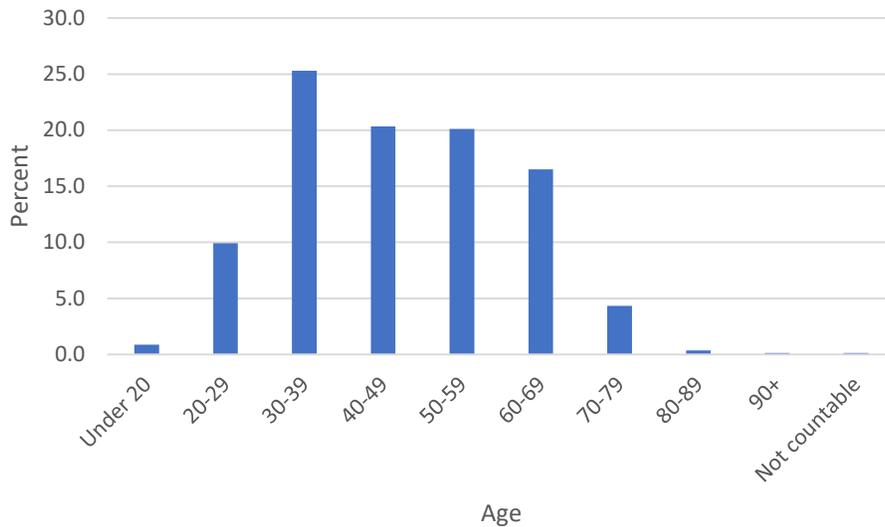


A positive finding from the survey is that 70% of respondents anticipate that they will continue to ride their bicycle more after the pandemic is over (or when things return to more normal conditions). Three percent do not believe they will, and 23% reported that they have not been riding their bicycle more during the pandemic. Thankfully, most respondents felt as if they had enough room to safely ride and maintain social distance during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was a reported problem in other cities. The City of Albuquerque did proactively try to address this issue with their Active Street Ordinance that offered applicants the ability to have nominated streets closed to thru traffic to make more room for people to safely recreate. Although most respondents felt they had enough space to safely ride, there were reports of overcrowding along areas of the Bosque Trail according to City Parks and Recreation officials and many written in-responses also specifically mentioned that the Bosque Trail was crowded. Mitigating known tight spots could be an effective strategy for planners to pursue.

The next section of the survey was geared toward participation in bike to work events and is likely most helpful for Bike to Work Day event organizers. Most respondents (90%) who took the survey said they were planning on participating or did participate in the Bike Thru Burque Week activities. Most people heard about the event from social media followed by word of mouth. For people who did not participate or were not planning to participate, about 38% of respondents said they did not know about the event. So, getting the word out and making the event widely known to the public remains a challenge for organizers. The event did attract a considerable number of first-time participants (44%) which is good for growing the event and attracting new people to bicycling.

The last section asked demographic information. This year’s event had more female (53%) participants than male (44%), and just under one percent of non-binary/third gender participants. As in past years, there are more participants from households with higher annual household incomes. Twenty-nine percent had annual

household incomes of \$100,000 or more. Or, put another way, participants from households with annual income less than \$50,000 accounted for 22% of respondents, and those with more than \$50,000 annual incomes was 59%. Reaching out to lower income households would be worthwhile to try to broaden the range of participants. This may perhaps involve broadening the scope of the event, which likely usually works best for people with 9-5 office jobs. The average age of participants this year was 46, but people in their 30s participated in the highest numbers as shown in the chart.



The top zip codes of participants were 87106, 87110, and 87108. This was similar to last year’s event, which had the top zip codes of 87106, 87110, and 87111.



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bike to Work Day survey remains a good way to get a pulse on residents' thoughts on bicycling, in part because the survey is consistently conducted and also because it rides on the coattails so to speak of a very popular annual bicycling event. Despite the change in format in 2020, last year was no exception with nearly 900 responses being collected.

Key findings from the survey include:

- ▶ There were fewer commuters this year, which likely reflects both pandemic conditions and the theme of the event of "It doesn't matter where you go, JUST BIKE!"
- ▶ Participation this year was not high among beginner bicyclists; organizers may want to explore ways to attract more of these bicyclists to participate in the event to increase bicycle mode share in the area.
- ▶ The event attracted a high number of first time participants (44% this year versus 27% last year). This may indicate the change in format and different activities offered was enticing to more people and should perhaps be offered again if possible.
- ▶ Most participants in the survey felt that bicycling conditions are getting better over time.
- ▶ The top difficulty cited for people bicycling is that "it feels unsafe riding around vehicles." This top difficulty relates to the top improvement respondents would like to see, which was protected bicycle lanes, as those facilities offer physical separation and protection from moving vehicles on roadways.
- ▶ The top three improvements respondents would like to see more of are protected bicycle lanes, multiuse paths, and buffered bike lanes. Last year's top response was also protected bicycle lanes, indicating a compelling desire for such facilities in the city.

MRMPO, the organization that developed the Bike To Work Day survey, will make the survey summary report available on its website, and will also make an effort to get these results to transportation decision makers, transportation planners and engineers, as well as advocates to help impart a better understanding of community needs and desires. The survey stands as a good way to gauge sentiment and assess the work government agencies are doing toward improving (or not improving) bicycle conditions. Making good use of survey data and findings will be key.



## APPENDIX A - Survey Instrument