

Cycles for Change

Impacts and opportunities: Results from a discussion of Cycles for Change's work in the Twin Cities metropolitan area

In 2013, Cycles for Change received funding from the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota to implement policy, systems, and environmental changes to improve the health of residents in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Cycles for Change has worked to increase leadership opportunities within its Community Partners Bike Library (the Bike Lending Library), a bike lending program aimed at increasing access to bikes and bike-related education for underserved communities through partnership with 16 different social service, government, non-profit, and community organizations. Cycles for Change has also built a network of individual and organizational leaders from underrepresented communities to influence policy and shape the built environment related to biking.

In October 2014, a group of 18 project stakeholders were invited to a Ripple Effect Mapping discussion about the project's impact in the community. The discussion participants were made up of members of the Bicycle Library Advisory Council, consisting of Cycles for Change staff, organizational and agency partners, and community residents, including youth. The event was facilitated in both English and Spanish. The discussion was intended not only to provide the participants a chance to consider the project's success in achieving its intended goals, but also to identify the indirect or unexpected project impacts.

PROJECT IMPACTS

During the discussion, all participants had opportunities to describe Cycles for Change's achievements and to discuss the indirect impacts of their work. The participants grouped each of these observed impacts into nine main types of changes that had taken place as a result of the project: broader engagement of communities; new or strengthened relationships between organizations; increased connections to the community among residents; improved approaches for working with the community; greater advocacy focused on health equity; strengthened connections among community members; broader health impacts; shifting perceptions of bikers and biking; and residents taking on greater leadership roles. Participants were not asked to rank the relative importance of these impacts in relationship to one another. However, the graphic included in this summary does show how many times the participants identified a change in each key area and offers a few examples of key impacts identified by the participants. A summary of the discussion related to each area of change is included in the summary, and the specific impacts identified by the participants during the mind mapping exercise are listed in the appendix.

What is Ripple Effect Mapping?

Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) is an evaluation tool used to better understand the intended and unintended impacts of a project. It is particularly helpful when evaluating complex initiatives that both influence, and are impacted by, the community. REM is a facilitated discussion with project staff and local stakeholders that creates a visual "mind map" during the discussion, showing the linkages between program activities and resulting changes in the community.

This approach is intended to help demonstrate the project's impacts more holistically and to describe the degree to which different types of impacts are observed by project staff and community stakeholders.

Ripple Effects Mapping: Cycles for Change

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF BIKERS AND BIKING

Perceptions about who bikes and reasons for biking is shifting among participants and the broader community

4%

ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH ADVOCACY

Other organizations are taking a greater equity focus

Cycles for Change is forming new connections to people and organizations interested in bike advocacy

Participants are experiencing being part of a larger movement

6%

DEVELOPING LEADERS

Cycles for Change is engaging youth in leadership opportunities through the apprenticeship program

Cycles for Change is supporting participants in establishing bike groups in other communities

2%

WORKING DIFFERENTLY IN THE COMMUNITY

Cycles for Change is taking a more holistic view of the role of biking in communities

Cycles for Change is asking communities what they want and need

Cycles for Change is reflecting on how to best serve communities

15%

ENGAGING BROADER AND UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES

Liaisons are reaching new and underrepresented communities

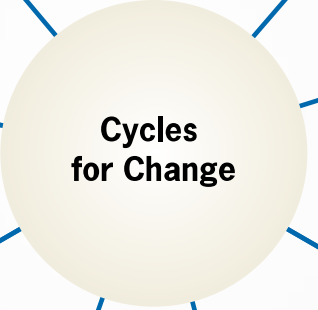
More residents are riding bikes as a result of classes and programs

Cycles for Change's growing staff diversity is supporting outreach with different communities

Cycles for Change's partnerships are expanding its reach

Cycles for Change is supporting greater community involvement by offering many points of access to the organization

29%



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Cycles for Change is contributing to a strengthened network of local leaders and organizations

Cycles for Change is helping other organizations broaden their community engagement efforts

Cycles for Change is forming new partnerships

17%

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS AMONG COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Intergenerational connections are being strengthened through family bike rides

Residents are meeting new people outside of familiar social circles through group rides

6%

PROMOTING BROADER HEALTH IMPACTS

Group rides to Farmers Markets are supporting healthy eating

Residents are making broader health changes in addition to increasing physical activity

Class participants are developing greater confidence in biking

6%

CONNECTING RESIDENTS TO THE COMMUNITY

Participants are developing greater awareness of resources in the community, bike infrastructure, and local routes

Participants are demonstrating growing support for local businesses

Cycles for Change's work is helping expand residents' access to transportation options

15%



Building relationships with other organizations

About one in five (17%) of the changes identified by the group participants related to new or strengthened relationships with other organizations. Through formal and informal partnerships, Cycles for Change has helped to strengthen the network of leaders and organizations within the Frogtown neighborhood of Saint Paul where it is located. Group participants noted this has been aided, in part, by the building of the light rail through the community.

These partnerships have helped Cycles for Change and other organizations reach a broader group of residents, especially the Latino community and the youth population in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Cycles for Change has worked closely with Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES) to reach Latino residents, and a representative from CLUES noted that its partnership with Cycles for Change has helped CLUES connect to other organizations serving the Latino community. Cycles for Change has worked with organizations to recruit youth participants for its apprenticeship program as well. A representative from Alley Bikes added that its partnership with Cycles for Change has helped the business reach new youth. As more organizations become interested in working with Cycles for Change, there are opportunities for greater expansion and coordination of efforts. Participants shared:

Cycles for Change facilitates opportunities for local leaders and educators to engage youth.

There is an increased effort in community engagement by the organization. Being a part of geographic community, not just a storefront. Being a neighbor and having a sense of place.



Advancing health equity through advocacy

The discussion also focused on ways that Cycles for Change is advancing health equity through advocacy efforts. Participants have begun to see other organizations take on a growing equity focus in their work. Transit for Livable Communities and NiceRide have both launched large-scale equity initiatives that were modeled in part after the Bike Lending Library. An advisory council member also observed that as a result of her involvement with Cycles for Change, the pool of bike advocates is expanding and she has developed new connections with people and organizations interested in bike advocacy. These advocacy efforts also carry benefits for Cycles for Change participants, who gain the experience of being involved in a larger bike advocacy movement.

I've met a number of folks interested in bike advocacy, anything from infrastructure to getting more people on bikes, period. I've met a lot of people, made a lot of contacts, helped to spread the bicycle advocacy pool.

It's interesting to see [other] bike/transit organizations shifting toward equity and inclusiveness.



Changing perceptions of bikers and biking

Participants also pointed out that Cycles for Change's work was helping to shift perceptions of bikers and biking. Participants discussed the ways that group rides with Latino residents have brought great awareness about who bikers are, both within the Latino community and among the broader community. Participants also reported that their involvement with Cycles for Change has expanded their understanding of reasons to bike. Biking can be a form of active transportation to get from place to place in addition to recreation.

Last Wednesday, we had a group ride with 10 Latinos and [a staff member]. And we're going by a group of white people, and they're looking at us and we're waving like, 'Hi!' Yes, people of color use bikes.

Developing leaders

Participants also identified ways that Cycles for Change supports the growth of leaders within the community. Through the Open Shop, Cycles for Change offers apprenticeships that provide leadership opportunities for youth while they learn bike mechanics. Informally, a participant who became involved with Cycles for Change through Mujeres en Acción y Poder began his own biking group for Latino residents in Brooklyn Center.

Working differently in the community

Participants also discussed ways in which Cycles for Change is working differently with its partners and with community members to better meet their needs. Participants related that Cycles for Change is becoming more intentional in asking what communities need and want and in incorporating perspectives from stakeholders at different points of access to the organization. This has led to more reflective conversations about how they serve communities. Participants also noted that Cycles for Change recognizes that there may be different reasons that organizations choose to partner with them and tries to work with them based on their needs.

The discussion also focused on the ways in which Cycles for Change is moving toward a more holistic view of biking, seeing it as a tool for social change.

Cycles for Change recognizes that everyone is a biker and acknowledges and builds programming around the many different reasons people bike.

Cycles for Change is asking what is needed and wanted in communities rather than telling communities what they need.

Promoting broader health impacts

Throughout the discussion, participants described ways Cycles for Change also promoted broader health impacts among residents, beyond physical activity. For examples, Cycles for Change has been intentional about offering group bike rides to farmers markets to promote healthy eating. One participant reported that she had lost 30 pounds after becoming involved with Cycles for Change and biking more. Participants also reported greater confidence in biking, and another participant shared that an elder in the community had begun taking his or her blood pressure daily after being involved with Cycles for Change.

Biking may start as an activity for recreation or transportation but then gets people thinking about their health and making changes in their health behaviors more broadly.

Connecting residents to the community

Participants provided a number of examples of how their involvement with Cycles for Change has led them to feel more connected to their community. A participant shared that group rides to farmers markets, gardens, and bike shops have helped him become more aware of and involved with the resources in his community. Participants also reported a growing awareness of bike infrastructure and routes and another member stated that she was shopping locally more often. Cycles for Change was also involved in the May Day Parade through the Heart of the Beast Theater and the Taco Tour with the City of Minneapolis. Both of these events helped Cycles for Change staff and participants connect with local businesses on Lake Street.

Cycles for Change also works to expand transportation options, especially for communities of color, supporting greater access to employment opportunities.

Being on a bike, you can slow down and see what's going on in the community. You can actually stop and pick fruit. It's good for you—fruit is right there on the tree.

As I started biking more, my economy got a lot more local because my life is a 10 mile radius instead of a 30 mile radius. I think about what I can carry on my bike, and I am patronizing local businesses more often.

I had to take four buses that took two hours [to get to where I was going] and with a bicycle it was faster and more fun.

Fostering connections among community members

Another theme in the discussion centered on supporting connections among community members. The group rides and the apprenticeship programs have offered community members opportunities to meet new people, connect over biking, and stay motivated to continue biking. Participants also observed that youth involved with Cycles for Change have been engaging older adults in biking and other physical activity, and families are biking together more as a result of the bike lending program to families. One youth participant noted his social circle has changed since becoming involved with the program:

Before Cycles for Change, I was mainly friends with people like me and since that I've started working with people who are Hispanic, White, or Hmong and they may not look like me but we can be friends.

Engaging broader and underrepresented communities

Close to one third (29%) of the impacts identified related to expanded engagement, particularly of underrepresented communities, in bicycling and bicycle advocacy. Cycles for Change works with liaisons to engage different communities, especially those that are less represented and not the typical face of bikers in Minnesota. Liaisons help participants sign up for the Bike Lending Library and actively participate in group rides, serving as role models for the communities with whom they work. Cycles for Change has also been able to leverage its partnerships to engage different communities, including CLUES, Mujeres en Acción y Poder, the Elder Lodge, and neighborhood organizations. Representatives from these organizations reported that participants from their programs who are involved with Cycles for Change are biking more and seeing financial and health benefits. Cycles for Change is expanding the bike lending program to Brooklyn Center.

Cycles for Change also changed its organizational practices to better engage community residents in its work. Participants discussed how the increased diversity of staff at Cycles for Change has helped to improve its reach into different communities. All events and publications are presented in English and Spanish, and occasionally in other languages, as appropriate. In addition, there are many points of access to be involved in Cycles for Change, including as a participant, youth apprentice, intern, volunteer, an advisory council member, liaison, staff member, or partner organization, or through the Open Shop for drop-in repairs. Cycles for Change works to build long-term relationships with those who become involved and supports participants in being involved in multiple ways.

For a small organization, Cycles for Change has been able to engage quite a few different communities, such as American Indian elders and the Latino community.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The challenges identified most often during the discussion related to the need for the Cycles for Change to be reflective about how the organization defines equity and to be intentional in using that understanding to frame the organization's work. Participants articulated that Cycles for Change is continuing to find a balance between providing a social service and engaging in community organizing. One participant noted that equity needs to be supported at all levels of the bike industry, not just at the level of the consumer.

The bicycle industry is a source of revenue and if people who are typically underrepresented are not benefiting from that revenue source, I don't think we have reached true equity.

Other challenges to the work that were noted included building consistent engagement, offering opportunities for different cultural communities to work together, and supporting cultural leadership.

The following questions may be helpful for Cycles for Change and its partners to consider as they work to address these challenges and plan their future work:

- Discussion participants had varied perceptions of how broadly Cycles for Change should focus its work related to equity. To what degree should Cycles for Change keep a targeted focus on advancing health equity by increasing access to biking and bike education or expand its focus to broader advocacy efforts related to equity? Who should Cycles for Change involve in setting the vision for their long-term goals and priorities for advancing health equity?
- How can Cycles for Change support more consistent, long-term engagement among residents and participants?
- How can the project provide opportunities for cultural communities to work together? What would it look like for Cycles for Change to be successful in supporting participants of color to take on leadership roles?

APPENDIX: Project impacts identified by discussion participants



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Cycles for Change has helped strengthen the network of organizations and reach within the Frogtown neighborhood.

The building of the light rail along University Avenue has provided a key opportunity for organizations to work together.

Cycles for Change is seen as a neighbor.

The organization has developed stronger roots in the community.

Cycles for Change connects local leaders.

Cycles for Change has helped other organizations broaden their base of support.

CLUES has connected to more organizations in the Latino community as a result of its work with Cycles for Change, including Mujeres y en Acción y Poder, Neighborhood House, Waite House, and the Corcoran Neighborhood Association.

The flexibility in scheduling events with other organizations helps to bring more people together - both staff and residents.

A representative from Alley Bikes has been able to refer residents to Cycles for Change as a resource for repairs and other biking issues.

Cycles for Change facilitates opportunities for local leaders and educators to engage youth.

The organization's relationship with Alley Bikes has helped connect more youth to biking.

CLUES and other organizations connected to Cycles for Change through liaisons are able to refer youth to the Apprenticeship Program.

More institutions are interested in becoming a part of the Cycles for Change program.

There are opportunities for continued expansion and greater integration.



ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH ADVOCACY

Other organizations focused on biking are beginning to take more of an equity focus.

Transit for Livable Communities and NiceRide have launched large-scale equity initiatives that were modeled in slightly different ways after the Bike Lending Library.

Through work with Cycles for Change, an advisory council member has made a number of new connections to people and organizations interested in bike advocacy, in terms of both infrastructure improvements and increasing biking.

This work is expanding the pool of bike advocates.

Participants experience being part of a larger movement of bike advocacy.



CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF BIKERS AND BIKING

Learn-to-Ride classes and group rides have changed perceptions about who can bike.

A Cycles for Change staff member shared, "Last Wednesday, we had a group ride with 10 Latinos and [a staff member]. And we're going by a group white people, and they're looking at us and we're waving like, 'Hi!' Yes, people of color use bikes."

Involvement has shifted stakeholder's perceptions about why people bike - for both active transportation and recreation.



DEVELOPING LEADERS

Youth apprenticeships through the Open Shop provide leadership opportunities and an outlet to learn bike mechanics.

A participant involved with Mujeres en Acción y Poder began a biking group for Latino residents in Brooklyn Center with the support of Cycles for Change.



WORKING DIFFERENTLY IN THE COMMUNITY

Cycles for Change is taking a more holistic view of biking.

The organization sees biking as a tool for social change.

A member of the advisory council has learned to look at all parts of a program, not just its individual components.

Cycles for Change is incorporating perspectives from stakeholders at various points of access to the organization.

Cycles for Change helps to promote broader health impacts, not just in terms of biking and physical activity.

Cycles for Change is asking what is needed and wanted in communities rather than telling communities what they need.

In working in more suburban areas such as Anoka and Blaine, biking has been approached in terms of active living for recreation. At Cycles for Change, the message is not about biking during free time, but about seeing it as a mode of transportation with positive health impacts. An advisory council member stated, "The conversation shift - I can hear the difference in the conversation."

Cycles for Change staff seek to find out what people want to learn about on group rides (e.g. farmers markets, bike repair shops) and design rides around these themes.

Cycles for Change equips bikes in ways that are customized to participants' needs, with features including bike racks, cables, locks, helmets, and trailers.

The discussions on changes in perceptions of who bikes have helped to spur dialogue on how Cycles for Change serves communities.

Cycles for Change recognizes that everyone is a biker and acknowledges and builds programming around the many different reasons people bike.

They also recognize the different reasons that organizations may choose to involve Cycles for Change and biking in their work, engaging these organizations where they are at.



PROMOTING BROADER HEALTH IMPACTS

Biking events at local farmers markets have provided opportunities for residents to learn about and try new foods.

Biking may start as an activity for recreation or transportation but then gets people thinking about their health and making changes in their health behaviors more broadly.

An older adult in the community started taking his/her blood pressure every day after being involved with Cycles for Change.

Residents have more confidence in biking as a result of Riding-in-Traffic classes, group rides, and involvement in the Women's Community Circle through Waite House.

A resident lost 30 pounds after learning how to bike more.



CONNECTING RESIDENTS TO THE COMMUNITY

Group bike rides to different farmers markets, gardens, and bike shops have increased participants' awareness of resources in the metro area.

A resident became involved with the gardens at Hope Community through biking.

An advisory council member is shopping locally more.

The advisory council member reported that he/she is patronizing more local businesses "because my life is now in a 10 mile radius, not a 30 mile radius."

A participant learned through the Cycles for Change bike shop about a better bike route to take that was faster, safer, and more scenic.

Cycles for Change's work helps to expand access to transportation, especially for communities of color.

This expanded access also helps connect people to employment opportunities, especially for communities of color.

A community resident reported, "I had to take 4 buses that took 2 hours [to get to where I was going] and with a bicycle it was faster and more fun."

An intern stated, "Being on a bike, you can slow down and see what's going on in the community."

A participant has begun to notice and be more aware of bike infrastructure in the community.

Cycles for Change participants rode in the May Day parade through the Heart of the Beast Theater and helped coordinate bikers for the Taco Tour through the City of Minneapolis.

These events provided opportunities to support and connect with local businesses on Lake Street.

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS AMONG COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Group rides offer an opportunity for community members to meet new people, connect over biking, and stay motivated about biking.

A youth apprentice stated, "Before Cycles for Change, I was mainly friends with people like me and since that I've started working with people who are Hispanic, White, or Hmong and they may not look like me but we can be friends."

Youth participants engaging adults in biking and other physical activity.

Cycles for Change lends bikes to families.

Families are biking together more.

ENGAGING BROADER AND UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES

Liaisons have provided a greater reach into different communities, especially those that are less represented and not the typical face of bikers in Minnesota.

Liaisons help residents sign up and fill out the application for the Bike Lending Library.

Liaisons are provided bikes through the Bike Lending Library and actively participate in group rides.

Liaisons serve as role models for community members they bring in.

A liaison was afraid to ride in traffic, and so participated in group rides by riding on the sidewalk, but still agreed to attend the rides to serve as a role model.

An advisory council member stated, "For a small organization, Cycles for Change has been able to engage quite a few different communities, such as American Indian elders and the Latino community."

CLUES has seen benefits among its participants who have been involved with Cycles for Change.

Latino participants are biking more and using cars less.

Biking has helped participants connected through CLUES with health, transportation, and financial issues.

American Indian elders have been engaged through the Elders Lodge.

Seven to nine bikes were loaned out to American Indian elders, and there are currently five active bikers.

The Bike Lending Library, Earn-a-Bike, and Open Shop programs have led to more residents riding bikes.

The greater diversity of staff at Cycles for Change has helped improve the organization's reach into different communities.

Internal changes at Cycles for Change to better reflect the community are still a work in progress.

The organization's relationship with the Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation has helped Cycles for Change establish roots in the Aurora St. Anthony neighborhood.

Cycles for Change may need to expand to other neighborhoods.

There are many points of access to be involved in Cycles for Change, including as a participant, youth apprentice, intern, volunteer, an advisory council member, liaison, staff member, or partner organization, or through the Open Shop for drop-in repairs.

Cycles for Change works to build long-term relationships with those who become involved, and many people serve and move through multiple roles.

Cycles for Change has worked with immigrant women, challenging misperceptions about safety and abilities, and reinforcing the idea that biking is for everybody.

A participant from Mujeres en Acción y Poder began a bike group for Latino residents in Brooklyn Center.

Eleven women are currently involved.

Cycles for Change is expanding the Bike Lending Library program to Brooklyn Center.

The organization is bringing the program to different cities, but also expanding rides to routes outside of the metro area.

All events and publications are presented in English and Spanish, and occasionally in other languages as appropriate.