

---

# Montpelier Bikes

## OUR MISSION:

To build a bicycling culture in the City of Montpelier for active transportation, personal health, environmental benefit, downtown business support, youth mobility, community livability, and pure joy.

---

Montpelier City Council  
39 Main St.  
Montpelier, VT 05602

June 5, 2009

Dear Mayor Hooper and members of the Council:

The Montpelier Bikes project appreciates your support for bicycling within the City of Montpelier, including funding of the Montpelier Bikes project with a Mazur grant through the Envision Montpelier process. At Wednesday's City Council meeting we will appear before you to inform you and ask your support for two specific opportunities before the City to improve conditions for bicycling.

### ***History & Background***

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are often considered the two faces of a common coin – the human-powered modes of transportation that provide linkages between home, work, transit, and the private automobile. Montpelier, as a City, has done an excellent job of providing facilities for walking, and continues to expand that network through sidewalk extensions and traffic calming.

The City has also provided some accommodations for bicyclists through some downtown bike racks (at City Hall, at the Library, and in front of Coffee Corner), and through the Winooski River Shared-use Path and the long-planned Central Vermont Regional Path (shared use path to Berlin.) Separated paths are vitally important for family bicycling, beginner bicyclists, and traffic-free enjoyment. The Central Vermont Regional Path will also serve a vital transportation function as a corridor between Montpelier and Barre, particularly for bicyclists traveling the full route between the cities.

Montpelier Bikes recognizes and applauds these initiatives. Last meeting the City Council also added support for bike paths to your priorities for 2009-10.

### ***Public Support***

Bicycle routes have broad public support in Montpelier. In the transportation survey Montpelier conducted in 2004, 75% of the 1000+ respondents said that bicycle transportation should be safely provided on major travel routes. This level of support was higher than public support for the transit center (51% in favor), and much higher than the idea of expanding intracity bus service (15% in favor). Note that in several questions, bike facilities were also ranked *higher in priority than pedestrian/sidewalk improvements*. (See pp. 8 & 9, [http://www.montpelier-vt.org/pdf/MP05\\_Final\\_DRAFT\\_Transportation\\_Chapter.pdf](http://www.montpelier-vt.org/pdf/MP05_Final_DRAFT_Transportation_Chapter.pdf))

The transportation plan chapter drafted by Smart Mobility in 2004 summarizes this survey. This plan was never adopted, but the survey data is still useful for gauging the relative public support for bicycling. This transportation plan also recommended the creation of a Bicycle Master Plan for the city. (pp. 14-15.)

---

## OUR ULTIMATE DREAM:

For Montpelier to be the most bicycle-friendly capital city in the U.S., with the number people bicycling roughly equaling the number of people walking, or the number of people in automobiles.

---

## ***On-Road Bicycle Facilities – A Primer***

While Montpelier Bikes certainly supports bike paths (more technically termed shared-use paths), we would like to ask the City Council to support complementary bicycle facilities on existing city streets, as a cost-effective means of extending the City's transportation bicycle network. The addition of on-road bicycle facilities has been shown in some studies to triple bicycle use as a mode of transportation. In Europe, even in cold, rainy northern Europe, approximately 1/3 of trips are made by bicycle.

Across this country, and worldwide, there is increasing support for including bicycle facilities on existing streets and roadways, as complementary to separated paths. Collectively, along with "bike paths," these facilities may be called "bikeways."

- Bike lanes create a space on the roadway that is designated for preferential use by bicyclists, indicated by stencils on the road and signs. Bike lanes are a well-established treatment in the U.S., recognized in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). In Vermont, there are bike lanes in Brattleboro, Burlington, Essex, Hartford / WRJ, St. Albans, Shelburne, South Burlington, and Springfield.
- Bicycle boulevards are streets that are specifically designated for bicycle use, and may include features to slow traffic to bicycle speeds, or to provide short-cuts for bicycling.
- Bicycle shared-use markings (aka "sharrows") are used to indicate bicycle use and positioning on streets that are too narrow for a separate bike lane. These visibly indicate to both motorists and bicyclists of the legitimate bicycle use of the shared road. Sharrows are in the process of being incorporated into national traffic engineering standards; currently over 75 cities in 28 states have used sharrows, and they are expected to be approved for use by early 2010. Burlington currently uses shared-lane markings.



In most instances, the details of how these facilities would play out on Montpelier streets would still be determined – we are seeking your support for the concept. There is also a specific, and immediate, opportunity to include on-road bicycle facilities in the Route 2 / 302 paving projects this summer.

### ***Current & Long-Term Opportunities***

Montpelier has before it two opportunities to expand a bicycling network in the city. One is an immediate opportunity, and one is a longer-term discussion that the Montpelier Bikes project seeks to initiate with the City Council and staff.

#### **1. Route 2 / 302 Paving Project.**

Working with Assistant DPW Director Tom McArdle and VTrans Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator Jon Kaplan, Montpelier Bikes has determined that minor tweaks to pavement markings, and the addition of signs and pavement markings, could create 1.6 miles of bicycle lanes along this key corridor from Montpelier to Barre.

Montpelier Bikes • Letter to City Council, June 5, 2009



A system of designated bicycle streets, which are signed and improved for bicycle commuting, clarifies the role of the bicycle in the street system, making streets safer for both bikes and automobiles (Berkeley, CA).

The traffic engineering indicates that this change is possible, and VTrans has in the past been willing to incorporate municipal request into a paving project even while under construction, as in the example of the Route 9 / Western Ave. bicycle lanes in Brattleboro.

Minor changes to the paving projects would create 1.6 miles of bike lanes by adding 16 signs, 7 plaques, 9 sets of pavement markings (arrow + bike symbol with helmet!), and 5 new posts. To the roundabout project, would be added 3 signs, 1 plaque, and 1 set of pavement markings, for minor tweaks to make a little more bike-friendly. VTrans has recommended that Montpelier add these changes to the roundabout project after the project is finished. For the paving project, it is currently in discussion (at this writing) as to whether VTrans will incorporate.



*Map - Dark green indicates potential Bike Lanes as part of the paving project, with complementary 4'+ shoulders on the section of Route 2 indicated in aqua blue. Other highlighting are very preliminary routes for other on-road bicycle facilities.*

*Potential Action:* Clarify City support for addition of bike lanes to this project.

## 2. Montpelier Bicycle Network.

Montpelier Bikes seeks to initiate discussion with the City Council and staff about prioritizing the creation of a bicycle network as the City seeks grant or other federal funding.

This project would include three components:

- Retrofitting existing city streets, as space permits, for on-street bicycle facilities as described above. This retrofit would take a progressive look at how to provide space and/or designation for bicycle use while following all national engineering standards. Funds would be used for engineering and implementation.
- Constructing bicycle shelters, providing bicycle lockers, and improving bicycle racks at several locations in the City:
  - Shelters at Main St. Middle School, High School, DET lot (transit connection), City Hall, Library, and Pool.
  - Bike Lockers at DET lot, Greyhound station (relocateable to future transit center).



*A bicycle shelter is a bicycle rack with a little roof over it - like a bus shelter. Bicycle shelters help protect bicycles from rain and snow, but do not increase the security of the bike parking.*



*A bicycle locker is an enclosed space. It protects the bicycle and accessories from the weather, but also increases security. Bicycle lockers may be rented short-term (by the day) or long-term (by the month). Rental is managed by a local retail outlet.*

These locations were identified through a bicycle parking survey conducted by Montpelier Bikes and have been approved by the Montpelier Planning Commission.

- Planning and design to fix a few "missing links." Three key links are – the connection between National Life Drive and the shared-use path (currently a harrowing experience shared with motorists coming off the interstate), an improved "short cut" connection across the state capitol area between Terrace St. and Court St./School St. – an identified route to school (currently including riding on the sidewalk, and a problematic one-way section of street), and minor improvements or a contra-flow bike lane at the western terminus of the shared-use path at Stone Cutters' Way.

*Potential action:* Montpelier Bikes would like the Council's feedback and blessing to work with the City to submit an application for a Transportation Enhancements Grant (Fall 2009) and to develop a budget / scope to potentially seek other federal funds as a high priority project and/or any future "stimulus" funds that may become available.

Representing Montpelier Bikes project, I will appear before the Council to further this discussion on Wednesday, June 10. We look forward to your further discussion and support for bicycling in Montpelier.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Becca Roof".

Becca Roof  
Going Green L3C  
Consultant to the Montpelier Bikes project