

# A Vision for Bicycling in Kenosha County, Wisconsin

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## Acknowledgements

### Kenosha County Bicycle Committee Voting Members

Paul Berce – Town of Somers  
Pat Casey – Town of Salem  
Colleen Fisch – Town of Bristol  
Kevin Fitzgerald – Village of Twin Lakes  
Sue Gerber – Village of Silver Lake  
Rich Gossling – Village of Bristol  
William Grady – County Board Supervisor  
Frank Kempf – Town of Paris  
Don Moldenhauer – County Executive Appointee  
Mary Ochoa-Petersen – Town of Wheatland  
Michael Orth – City of Kenosha  
Maria Ostrander – Town of Randall  
Tim Popanda – Village of Paddock Lake  
Michael Spence – Village of Pleasant Prairie

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### Prepared by



The Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin is a nonprofit membership-based statewide bicycle education and advocacy organization. The Bike Fed's mission is to make Wisconsin a better place to bicycle. Bicycling is a viable, healthy and environmentally sustainable means of transportation, recreation and sport. The Bike Fed provides bicyclists of all ages with information on recreational rides, safety tips and commuting skills while educating decision makers about the importance of bicycling to our communities.

Learn more at <http://www.bfw.org>

## Introduction

Communities across the nation are recognizing that bicycling facilities are an important part of their infrastructure. These facilities, including shared-use paths and on-street bicycle lanes, offer transportation and recreation choices that are available to all ages and socioeconomic groups. At the same time, a robust bicycle network can boost the local economy: urban shared-use paths have a positive impact on home values, studies have shown that people bicycling to local businesses spend more than those who drive, and bicycle tourism can draw increased traffic to local businesses.

Bicycling is a convenient and efficient form of transportation, and for some people, their main mode of transportation. Like the automobile, a bicycle provides its user with autonomy and flexibility regarding travel schedules and destinations. At the same time, bicycling is accessible to many people who cannot drive: the young, some elderly and those who do not own a car. A complete transportation system serves not only motorists, but also cyclists and pedestrians in a safe and efficient manner.

Kenosha County provides many bicycling opportunities: the Kenosha County Bike Trail links communities in the eastern part of the county; local streets in Kenosha provide accessibility throughout the city; roads in the northwest portion of the county provide recreational riding opportunities; and trails in the Bong Recreation Area are a regional attraction. Despite this, bicycling in much of Kenosha County is difficult and unpleasant due to high traffic volumes and speeds on many streets and roads. Additionally, some municipalities in the county have done more planning for bicycles than others, resulting in disconnected networks and differing goals.

To address this fragmentation, County Executive Jim Kreuser convened a committee with representatives from all Kenosha County municipalities as well as local planning staff, representatives of local bike clubs, and other members of the public. The committee worked with the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin to form a vision for bicycling and prioritize projects to improve bicycling conditions in Kenosha County. This document is the culmination of that effort.

## Existing Conditions

Kenosha County is the most southeastern county in Wisconsin. The county is bordered by Illinois to the south, Lake Michigan to the east, Racine County to the north, and Walworth County to the west. The 2000 Census reported that the county population was 149,255 and the estimated 2008 population was 162,094. The majority of this population is concentrated in the City of Kenosha and the Village of Pleasant Prairie, both of which are east of the I-94 corridor. The county west of I-94 is largely rural in character, with small villages throughout the southern half of the county.

The road network outside of the urban areas is primarily comprised of county highways. These roads form a good network throughout the county for motor vehicles, but are often too busy for comfortable bicycle use. County highways in the eastern and southern portions of the county are particularly busy and many do not have paved shoulders to accommodate bicyclists.

Bicycle planning has occurred in Kenosha County for a number of years at the state, regional and local level. This planning effort has resulted in a network of 15.5 miles of on-street bicycle facilities and 27.5 miles of off-street facilities. The plans have also proposed 189.1 miles of on-street facilities and 108.3 miles of off-street facilities.



Members of the Kenosha County Bicycle Facilities Planning and Development Committee discuss aspects of bicycling in Kenosha County.

Despite the existing plans and the large amount of proposed facilities, existing facilities are scattered and disconnected. Additionally, existing efforts have largely been concentrated within specific municipalities without an eye toward regional integration and connectivity.

This section summarizes existing plans and policies that impact bicycling throughout Kenosha County as well as existing bicycle facilities and road conditions.

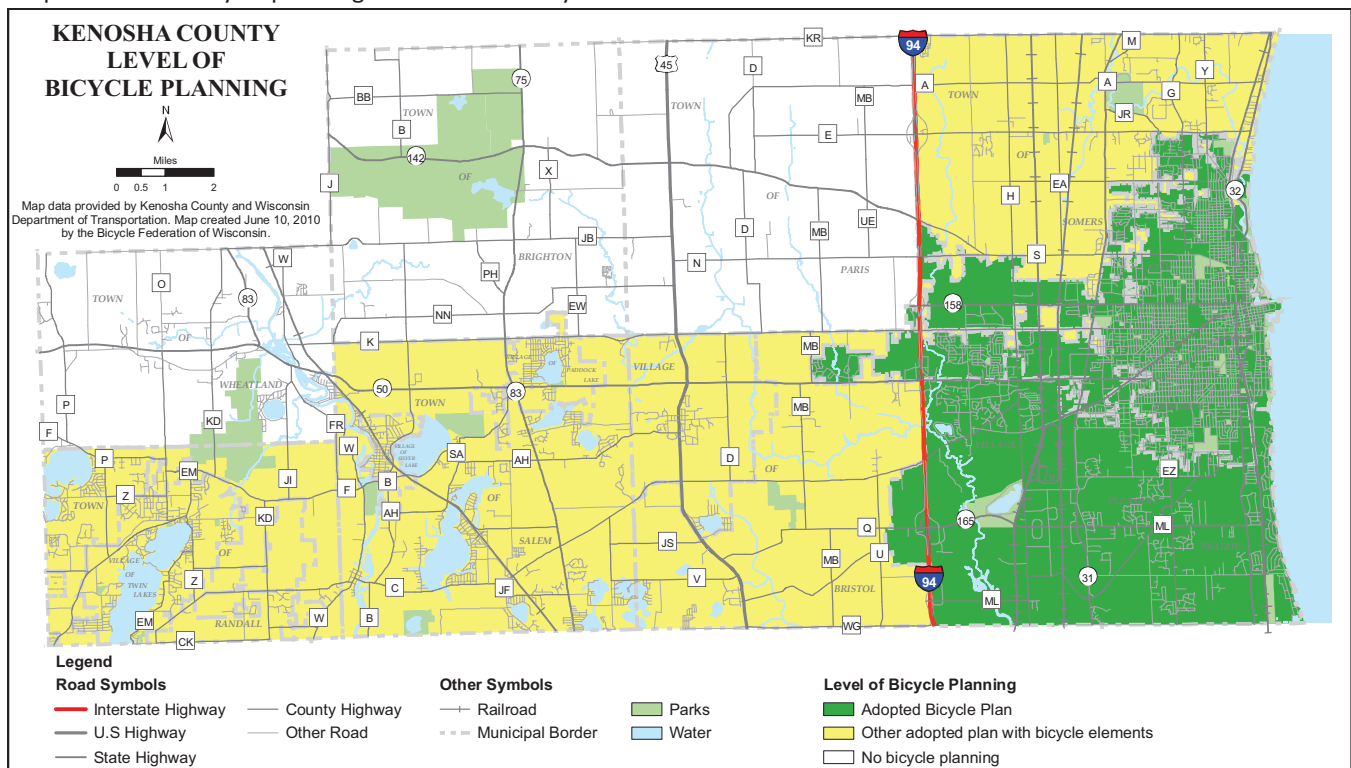
### Bicycle Plans and Policies

The City of Kenosha and the Village of Pleasant Prairie have both adopted some form of comprehensive bicycle plan. The City of Kenosha Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Implementation Plan was adopted in February 2007 and identifies eight primary routes as well as numerous connector routes to link the primary routes and provide better connectivity throughout the city. The Village of Pleasant Prairie Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Plan was adopted in February 2010. Although focused on facilities, the plan also includes recommendations for education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation activities that will help increase cycling within the Village.

The villages of Bristol, Paddock Lake, Silver Lake and Twin Lakes and the towns of Bristol, Randall, Salem and Somers have adopted plans that reference bicycle planning in some capacity. The majority of these plans are comprehensive plans or park and open space plans in which cycling is not the primary focus. These plans correspond to the most heavily populated areas of Kenosha County: the area east of I-94 and the area south of County Highway K. Map 1 displays the portions of the county with some level of bicycle planning

In addition to these plans, a number of regional and state plans and policies address bicycling in Kenosha County. Existing plans by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) propose bicycle facilities throughout the county. Additionally, in 2009, the state passed “Complete Streets” legislation which mandates the accommodation of pedestrians and cyclists on all new and reconstructed roads in Wisconsin that receive any state or federal funding.

Map 1: Levels of bicycle planning in Kenosha County



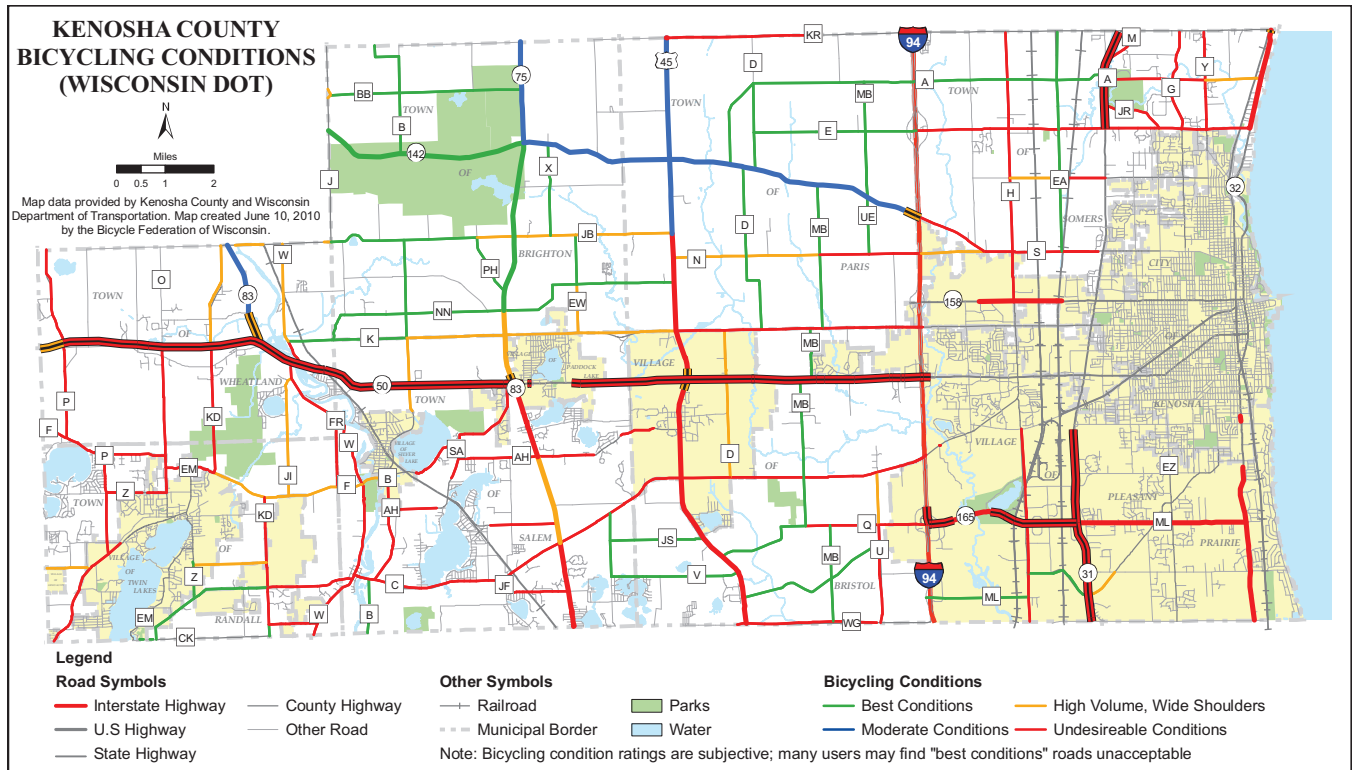


## Bicycle Suitability of Roads

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) maintains a map of the suitability of roads statewide for bicycle use. The map rates county, state and U.S. highways from the “best conditions” for bicycling to “undesirable conditions” for cycling. WisDOT’s ratings generally do not include roads within incorporated areas. The ratings are based on traffic counts, speed limits and the width of specific roads. WisDOT’s ratings are informative, but it should be kept in mind that many, if not most, cyclists will find even the “best” roads uncomfortable to cycle on due to traffic speeds or volumes. Map 2 displays WisDOT’s bicycle suitability ratings for Kenosha County.

The majority of roads south of Highway 50 and east of I-94 that are rated by WisDOT are rated as undesirable for bicycling. This is primarily due to high traffic volumes combined with a lack of adequate paved shoulders on roads in these areas. These areas are also where most of Kenosha County’s population is concentrated. Combined, these factors mean that it is difficult for most Kenosha County residents to comfortably bicycle on the roadways near their homes.

Map 2: Bicycle suitability of roads in Kenosha County

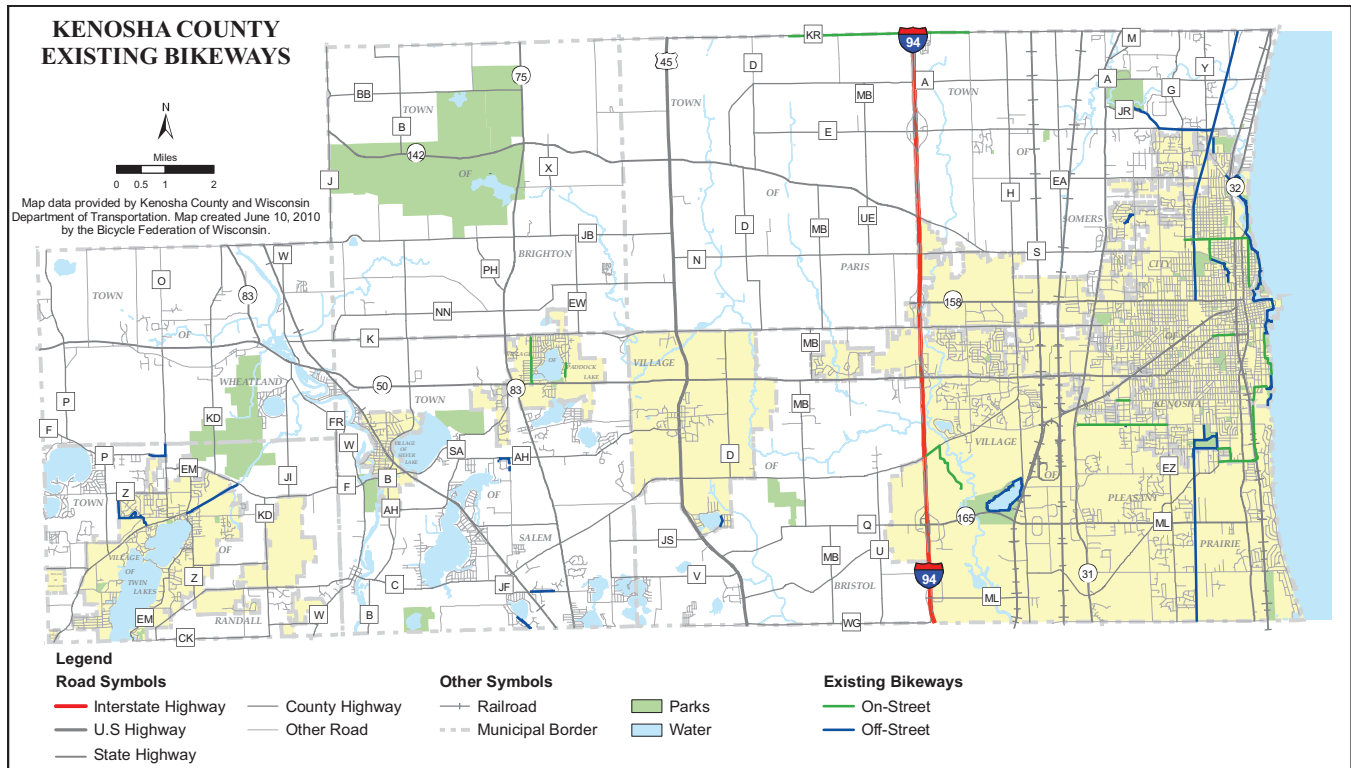


## Existing Bicycle Facilities

Currently, 15.5 miles of on-street bicycle facilities and 27.5 miles of off-street facilities exist in Kenosha County. These facilities are concentrated in The Village of Pleasant Prairie and the City of Kenosha, although small segments of on- and off-street facilities also exist in the Village of Twin Lakes, the Village of Paddock Lake, and at a few sites scattered around the county.

The existing facilities within the county are largely disconnected and do not form a continuous network, even within Pleasant Prairie and Kenosha where the majority of the facilities exist. Map 3 displays the existing bicycle facilities within the county.

Map 3: Existing bicycle facilities in Kenosha County



## Proposed Bicycle Facilities

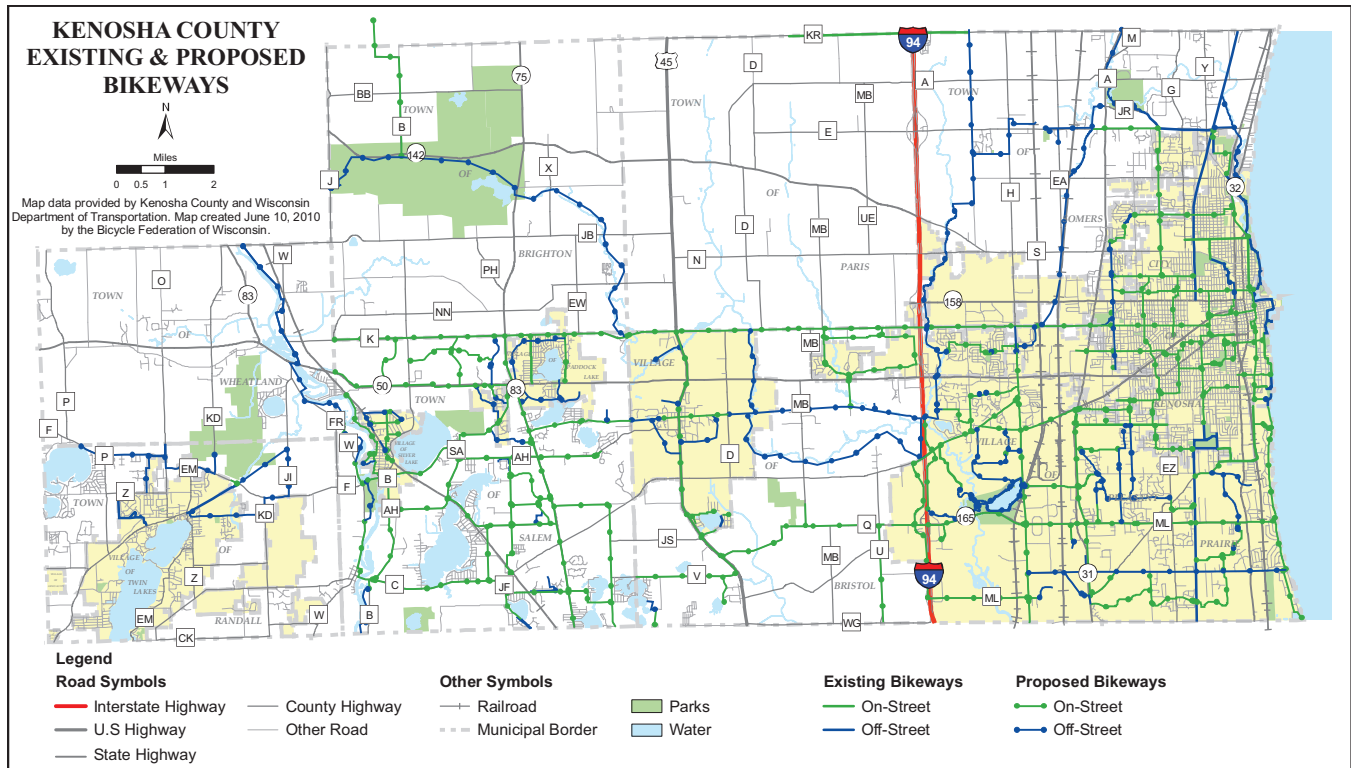
Although there are few existing bicycle facilities in Kenosha County, many miles of new facilities have been proposed. The plans summarized above propose a network of 189.1 miles of on-street facilities and 108.3 miles of off-street facilities. Nearly all of these facilities are concentrated in the City of Kenosha, the Village of Pleasant Prairie, and areas south of County Highway K; this corresponds to the areas of the county with at least some level of bicycle planning. The existing and proposed bicycle facilities are displayed in Map 4.

The City of Kenosha's bicycle plan proposed adding 47 miles of on-street bicycle facilities and 14 miles of off-street facilities to the existing facilities within the city. Although the plan was adopted three years ago, little progress has been made in implementing the proposed projects. The Village of Pleasant Prairie's bicycle plan proposes adding 51 miles of on-street facilities and 29 miles of off-street facilities. The Village is currently working to implement some of the facilities recommended in the plan, although many of the facilities, particularly off-street ones, will not be implemented until currently undeveloped areas of the Village are developed.

Two lengthy state trails are proposed in Kenosha County: one through the Fox River corridor from the Illinois border north to Racine County (and on to Burlington), and one beginning in Racine, running south through Kenosha and into Pleasant Prairie, and then west through the Bong Recreation area. When complete, these trails will provide important north to south and east to west corridors for transportation and recreation in Kenosha County. However, as of May 2010, there is no timeline for construction of these trails.

Implementation of many of the proposed facilities will not occur for quite some time. Expansion of roadways to include bike lanes or wide shoulders will not occur until the road is scheduled to be resurfaced or rebuilt while other facilities will not be implemented until areas of the county that are rural in character develop to a more urban or suburban character. As this development occurs, a strong plan should be in place to ensure that on-street and off-street facilities are included with new development.

Map 4: Existing and proposed bicycle facilities in Kenosha County



## Surrounding Facilities

To be successful, bicycle facilities should form a complete network that does not end at political borders. The areas surrounding Kenosha County include a number of important off-street bicycle facilities as well as streets that provide bicycle accommodations. Map 5 displays existing and proposed trails adjoining Kenosha County.

Numerous trails and future trail extensions exist south of Kenosha County in Illinois. While much of the trail network in Illinois is still in the planning stages, many lengthy trail segments have been completed. The existing Kenosha County Bike Path connects to the Robert McClory Bike Path in Illinois. Just south of Pleasant Prairie and east of I-94, the Des Plaines River Trail runs south for over 25 miles, with many more miles in the planning stages. This trail and the McClory Bike Path provide important linkages throughout the greater Chicago metropolitan region and provide access to numerous communities and destinations. Additional paths and trails are planned in Illinois that will connect to Kenosha County near County Highways U and B and near Benet Lake. A lengthy path network also exists less than a mile from the southwest corner of Kenosha County in Illinois.

In Wisconsin, Walworth and Racine Counties also contain trails to the west and north of Kenosha County. While much of the trail network in these counties is in the planning stages or has merely been proposed, a few segments of trail have been built. Just northwest of Kenosha County, the White River State Trail and Burlington trails intersect in Burlington. These trails run west to Elkhorn and north to the Oak Leaf Trail network in Milwaukee County. Additional trails are planned in both counties.

















