Southeast New Mexico Cycling
Local Cyclist Perception Study
Spring 2018

Introduction

Edge Philanthropy, LLC ("Edge") was engaged to study a variety of cycling related matters that can enhance or impede cycling in behalf of Southeast New Mexico Cycling ("SENMC"). SENMC (www.senmcycling.org) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote and support safe cycling with the intent of growing participation in cycling. SENMC plans to utilize the results of the study to further promote and enhance local cycling.

The purpose of the study is to better understand perceptions, on a range of matters considered important to local cyclists, among cycling club members and others which can guide SENMC in enhancing and expanding cycling activity. SENMC devised a survey to assess perceptions within six important areas. Survey respondents included SENMC club members ("known cyclists") and local college athletes ("potential cyclists"). A total of 302 surveys with 34 questions provided potential for up to 10,268 data points in support of the study.

This report is organized as follows:

- **Participant Selection and Recruitment**
- **Areas of Focus**
- **Findings**
- **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Participant Selection and Recruitment

There are two distinct categories of survey respondents in this study. As earlier defined, they were known and potential cyclists. Having different categories of cyclists served two important functions. First, this allowed for a larger number of participants for meaningful data. Second, different categories of participants enhances triangulation of the data for more reliable findings.

SENMC maintains a membership list of forty-nine (49) known cyclists. Known cyclists were considered especially important to include for the purposes of surveying perceptions, especially given that they are presumably more consistently engaged in cycling activity. All forty-nine known cyclists were invited to participate in the study. Thirty-five (35), or 71.4%, of the known cyclists invited participated in the study. Invitations (along with surveys) to participate were sent to all known cyclists via e-mail. SENMC supplied e-mail addresses for known cyclists. Known cyclist respondents returned completed surveys by e-mail. While the participation level of known cyclists was high, the total number of responses was insufficient for the purposes of conducting a meaningful study.

In an effort to significantly expand available data, a local university, the University of the Southwest (USW), was approached about the prospect of inviting college athletes to participate in the study. Local college athletes were considered to be reasonable proxies for potential cyclists, because they are already engaged in physically-demanding sports and they are intimately familiar with local conditions in which cycling occurs. Accordingly, the terms "potential cyclists" and "college athletes" are used interchangeably in this report.

USW responded positively and it invited athletes directly to participate. SENMC nor Edge were involved in the process of extending invitations to college athletes, but received hard copies of surveys anonymously completed. Two-hundred and sixty-seven (267) completed potential cyclist surveys were received.

Not all participating potential cyclists actually engage in cycling. So, general applicability of this sample was tested by comparing reported frequencies of participation in group rides and self-assessment as advanced cyclists. The results were remarkably similar when compared to findings with known cyclists, as demonstrated in the following:

	Known Cyclists	**Potential Cyclists**
Monthly participation in group rides:	18%	19%
Weekly participation in group rides:	12%	10%
Occasional participation in group rides:	71%	70%
Self-assessment as advanced cyclists:	23%	24%

These findings are fundamental to cycling related knowledge and enhanced confidence in inclusion of college athlete survey data in the study. On matters most indicative of inclination to participate in cycling, there was no material difference between the two groups surveyed.

Areas of Focus

Perceptions were assessed in six areas considered important to this study. They included:

- Factors that determined important to individual cycling-related preferences. Preference factors addressed in the survey included motivation to participate in cycling for community, exercise, exercise, enjoyment; preferences regarding riding alone or with a group, and self-reporting regarding level of cycling ability. Eight survey items were used to assess preference-related dispositions. Understanding motivations underlying participation in cycling can be useful in terms of public policy and SENMC programming.

- Frequency of participation in group rides. Participants were given the opportunity to select among options including weekly, monthly, occasionally, or to not respond if they did not

participate in group rides. This was an important perception for SENMC to understand in planning its cycling related activities.

- Frequency of cycling relative to desired level of cycling. Participants were asked if they get to cycle as often as they like and if they would like to cycle more often. This is important to understand in giving appropriate weight to other perceptions assessed with respect to preferences and local conditions.

- Assessment of local cycling conditions. Participants were asked to assess road pavement, existence of adequate shoulders, and respectful conduct by drivers of vehicles.

- Feedback on club organized rides and activities. Nine survey items provided feedback on essential SENMC activities.

- Factors important to increased cycling. Participants were asked to select three of nine conditions and/or resources they believe would induce more participation in cycling. Findings represent targeted opportunities to influence public policy and SENMC offerings.

Findings

Participants were encouraged to respond to survey questions they felt qualified to address. They were under no obligation to respond to questions they did not think they could exercise effective input. Known cyclists responded to virtually all of the survey questions. Understandably, potential cyclist responses were less uniform. That said, potential cyclists, on average, responded to between 84.2% and 88.1% of the survey questions in each of the categories. This allowed for significant data in support of findings.

The following reports survey responses by category of participant:

	Known	Potential
1. I ride a bicycle primarily for commuting.	6%	12%
2. I ride a bicycle primarily for exercise.	94%	54%
3. I ride a bicycle primarily for fun.	94%	53%
4. I prefer riding with others.	83%	50%
5. I prefer riding alone.	32%	44%
6. I am an advanced cyclists.	23%	24%

7. I am an experienced, but not advanced cyclist.	76%	49%
8. I am a novice to cycling.	8%	20%

Participation in Group Rides

	Known	Potential
1. I participate in local group rides.		
a. Weekly	18%	19%
b. Monthly	12%	10%
c. Occasionally	71%	70%

Ride Frequency

	Known	Potential
1. I ride as often as I like.	29%	56%
2. I would like to ride more often.	71%	43%

Local Ride Conditions

	Known	Potential
1. Local roads are generally well paved.	63%	55%
2. Local roads have good shoulders.	38%	52%
3. Local drivers are mostly respectful of cyclists.	63%	50%

Perceptions Regarding Rides

	Known	Potential
1. Routes for local group rides are reasonably safe.	97%	63%
2. I prefer riding in a group as opposed to riding alone.	88%	58%
3. I feel safer riding in a group than alone.	88%	56%
4. I feel that other group riders look out for me.	97%	62%

5. I am likely to ride more often if group rides are organized.	74%	57%
6. I would like to ride shorter distances than existing group rides.	39%	52%
7. I would like to ride longer distances than existing group rides.	32%	39%
8. I would like basic bike mechanic training.	72%	41%
9. I would like safe cycling training.	55%	39%

What Would Encourage More Cycling?

	Known	Potential
1. If there was a local bicycle repair shop.	15.6% (3rd)	18% (2nd)
2. If there were more bike trails.	22.1% (2nd)	27.2% (1st)
3. If group rides were organized at a faster pace.	1.3%	9.2%
4. If group rides were organized at a slower pace.	5.2%	6.8%
5. If local motorists were more respectful of cyclists.	10.4%	11.1% (3rd)
6. If local roads had larger, protected shoulders.	23.4% (1st)	9.4%
7. If local road surfaces were smoother.	7.8%	8.6%
8. If there was more traffic law enforcement for cyclists.	3.9%	4.9%
9. If there were more social events with cyclists.	10.4%	4.8%

There are several key takeaways from the data reported above. Potential cyclists are twice as inclined to use a bicycle for commuting by contrast to known cyclists. Alternatively, known cyclists are much more motivated by interest in exercise, recreation, and socializing. This said, around seventy percent of both groups only ride occasionally. A question arises about why people are riding more often.

Between forty-three (potential cyclists) and seventy-one percent (known cyclists) of respondents said they want to ride more often. However, both groups identified safety related concerns (e.g., relatively low ratings for local road conditions, shoulders, and traffic safety concerns). It appears that SENMC's group rides have helped mitigate safety concerns (e.g., 97% known cyclists rate

group rides as safe). In this regard, the role SENMC plays for known cyclists seems to at least partially mitigate safety-related concerns.

However, SENMC cannot overcome all safety concerns or reach effectively beyond the bounds of its members. In this regard, community level actions appear needed if cycling is to increase materially. The surveys provided meaningful insights into what community actions may be needed to enhance both the level of, and safety for, local cycling.

With respect to public policies, two alternative approaches emerge from the data for enhancing local cycling. There was a strong overall preference for bike trails, with appropriate paving, that avoids cyclist interaction with motorists. This would achieve much in terms of perceived enhancement of safety for both individual and group rides. An alternative strategy would likely require three integrated components: better paved and larger road shoulders, a motorist education campaign related to cycling, and significantly greater law enforcement that is more proactively protective of cyclists. It should also be noted, that respondents believe the absence of a local bicycle shop is a negative factor.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The data suggests that cycling is active in the community. The activities of SENMC appear significantly important in achieving and supporting the current level of cycling. However, it appears that existing public policy is not yet sufficiently supportive of cycling, especially safe cycling. The reach and relevance of SENMC is limited and, by itself, the nonprofit cannot significant further enhance local cycling. For this to occur, policy and resource allocation decisions will need to be carefully considered.