

BY SARA KRAUSE CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Working Together to 'Complete' our Streets

The Bicycle Program Harmonizes with Street and Bridge to deliver state-of-the-art services while saving taxpayer dollars.

When it all comes right down to it, the primary driver behind the success of our programs and projects in PWD is cost. Operating efficiently and effectively to manage cost and achieve economies of scale is one of the ways that we can be successful in service delivery. A great example of how PWD does this is through the partnership of Street and Bridge Operations and the Bicycle Program.

Each summer, the Neighborhood Connectivity Division's (NCD) Bicycle Program "follows" the street maintenance schedule of Street and Bridge Operations (SBO) to implement the bicycle plan. Adopted as an ordinance by the City Council in 2009, the Bicycle Master Plan update calls for the installation of an extensive network of bicycle facilities throughout the City.

“By following the street maintenance schedule of Street and Bridge, we reduce our costs to install most bike facilities from an average of \$140k per mile to \$15k per mile. This would be like going to the store and getting a 90% off sale item on tax free day.”

- Nathan Wilkes,

Engineer Associate, Neighborhood and Connectivity Division

Given that we are poised to install or improve 50 miles of bicycle facilities this year results in a savings of over \$6 million, or in our fiscally constrained world means that we are getting a lot more bicycle facilities on the ground. In some cases, Street and Bridge utilizes in-house crews to do the resurfacing and striping, and in others, employs outside contractors. Regardless, by following the SBO maintenance schedule, there's a clear benefit: the roadway would have to be resurfaced regardless. This coordination process has improved over the last several years and has resulted in improved service delivery to the public.

Each year, Bicycle Program staff receives the next year's planned street main-

tenance schedule. In some cases, NCD works with Street and Bridge to include longer or different roadway segments that better allow for the implementation of the bicycle plan. "We simply take the schedule and align it with our bicycle plan. Since we're operating with a blank slate, it gives us the opportunity to develop the best engineering solution possible within the existing roadway. We also coordinate with the Transportation Department and review Neighborhood Plans to ensure that we can facilitate as many traffic improvements as possible for ways to move towards a more 'complete street' that works for everyone.

But, there's more than just a cost-

savings benefit to this approach. Wilkes says the 'blank slate approach' allows for the application of more comprehensive traffic solutions such as road diets (four to three lane conversions) and buffered bicycle lanes. Additionally, when bicycle facilities are added, NCD engages in a public process to inform area residents of the changes, particularly when parking is modified along the roadway. "We've found that by informing people that the whole roadway is being configured, they look at the change differently. This is part of a normal street maintenance process, and people tend to look on that favorably. It helps us to be a department implementing multiple goals with one project."

City worker installs a 'sharrow', which is used to indicate areas where bicyclists and cars must share a lane.