

## Survey Highlights

### Survey Background

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) commissioned a survey of residents to capture the views of the public-at-large about bicycle use across the region to help guide future bicycle plans and projects that affect bicyclists.

The NCTCOG Bicycle Opinion Survey was conducted by telephone with adults from within the 6 areas of the region: Collin County, Denton County, Dallas County, Rockwall County and Tarrant County) and a sixth area comprised of the seven other more rural counties (Ellis County, Hood County, Hunt County, Johnson County, Kaufman County, Parker County and Wise County). A total of 1,250 interviews were conducted with roughly equal numbers of adult residents within each of these six areas. Additional interviews were conducted with residents of the cities of Denton, Frisco, Garland and Plano so that just over 200 total interviews were completed in each of these cities. All told, 1,910 residents were interviewed. Survey results were weighted so that respondents' gender, age, race, ethnicity and jurisdiction of residence were represented in the proportions reflective of the region.

### Key Findings

#### Frequency of Bicycling

- **About one-third, 36%, of respondents had bicycled at least once in the past 12 months.**

Those under age 25 and those between the ages of 45 to 54 years were more likely to bicycle than were those of other ages. Among those who had bicycled in the last year, 61% had ridden at least a few times a month.

- **Spring was the most popular time of year for bicycling, while winter was the least likely time for bicyclists to go for a ride.**

Among those who had ridden a bicycle at least once in the past 12 months, 95% rode at least one to or two days during the spring season (March, April, May), and 45% rode at least once or twice a week during the spring. The frequency of bicycling was less during the warmer summer and fall seasons, however more than eight in ten bicyclists rode at least one or two days during those seasons (84% in the summer and 85% in the fall). Only 47% of those who had ridden a bicycle at least once in the past 12 months reported riding at least one or two days during the winter season.

#### Bicycling for Transportation or Recreation

- **In the previous 30 days, 13% of all respondents had bicycled for transportation, such as to get to work or to school, to go shopping or to get to another destination.**

Young adults under the age of 25 were most likely to ride a bicycles for transportation, with 24% having done so, while adults ages 45-54 years had the second highest proportion of respondents bicycling for transportation at 16%.

- **In the previous 30 days, 26% of respondents reported riding for fun or exercise.**

Approximately one-third of all respondents between the ages of 18-54 bicycled in the past month for exercise, while respondents older than 55 were less likely to bicycle for recreation.

## **Perceived Barriers to Bicycling**

- **Lack of various types of bicycle facilities were the reasons most often identified among all respondents as the top obstacles to bicycling or bicycling more often.**

About one-half of respondents named the lack of biking lanes, trails and paths; the lack of connections between biking lanes, trails and paths; or not having showers or a place to freshen up at the destination as impediments to using a bicycle or using one more often.

- **In fact, the closer respondents lived to bicycle facilities the more likely they were to report riding a bicycle.**

Respondents who lived within one-half mile of a bicycle facility were more likely to have bicycled within the last 12 months than those who lived further than one-half mile from a bicycle facility. Forty-five percent of respondents who lived within one-half mile of a bicycle facility (off-street path and/or on-street bikeway) rode a bicycle in the past year, while 34% who lived more than one-half mile of a bicycle facility reported bicycling in the past year.

- **However, a majority of respondents indicated that there are “too few” bicycle facilities in their communities.**

Survey participants were asked their opinions about the amount or availability of various bicycle facilities in their community, and whether they thought there were too many, about the right amount, or too few of each. The proportion reporting they felt there were too few of each type of facility was:

- 62% too few off-street bicycle paths and trails,
- 63% too few bicycle-friendly streets,
- 73% too few on-street dedicated bike lanes, and
- 75% too few places to park bicycles such as bike racks and storage locations.

- **Those who lived more than one-half mile of a bicycle facility were somewhat more likely to feel there were too few bicycle facilities than were those who lived within one-half mile of a bicycle facility.**

About seven in ten respondents who lived more than one-half mile from a bicycle facility felt there were too few off-street bicycle paths and trails (68%), too few on-street dedicated bike lanes (77%), and too few bike-friendly streets (69%). Among those who lived within one-half mile from a bicycle facility, the proportions who felt there were too few of each type of facility was lower, but still a majority of respondents (too few off-street bicycle paths and trails, 55%; too few on-street bicycle lanes, 67%; and too few bike-friendly streets, 54%).

- **Weather conditions and the distance to destinations were other reasons for North Texans not bicycling more often.**

Hot weather conditions was given as reason for not riding or riding more often by 64% of respondents, while cold weather was cited by fewer respondents, 27%. The distance to destinations was a barrier for a majority of rural respondents (60%) as well as nearly half of respondents in more urban areas (46%).

## **Bicycle Access**

- **A majority of respondents considered improvements to increase bicycle access to be “essential” or “very important” for their community.**

More than half of respondents considered the following to be essential or very important:

- Providing traffic signals or crossing beacons at intersections and crossings to warn drivers of bike and trail users crossing the road, 72%
- Providing bike lanes separated from vehicles so bikes and cars do not have to share the same lane, 70%
- Providing bike trails separated from roadways, 56%

Half of respondents (50%) considered it essential or very important for their community to lower traffic speeds on community roadways to improve the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists sharing the road.

- **Four aspects were thought to have a negative impact on bike access in their neighborhood by a majority of respondents: drivers exceeding neighborhood speed limits (66% of respondents agreed with this), lack of access to bike lanes (64%), volume of traffic on nearby streets (59%) and speed of traffic on nearby streets (58%).**

Respondents were asked to rate a total of nine aspects of the bike-friendliness of their neighborhood. While four of these aspects were rated negatively, several were rated positively, including crime rates, street maintenance and access to quiet streets. Items that roughly half of respondents felt were positive for bike-access and roughly half thought were negative (between 45% and 55%) included access to off-street bike trails or paved paths and traffic volume on the street where they lived.

- **The type of bike facility design, location, and traffic volumes were significant influences on respondents’ level of comfort bicycling.**

Those interviewed for this project were asked how comfortable they would feel bicycling in various scenarios. Overall, respondents felt the most comfortable riding a bike on an off-street path (85% reported feeling “very” or “somewhat comfortable) or using a major urban street that had two lanes of traffic in each direction with speeds of 30 to 35 miles per hour with on-street bike lanes separated from traffic by a raised curb (86% comfortable).

Bicyclists’ level of comfort riding on a street increased significantly if the street was described as having designated bike facilities and safety improvements including measures to slow traffic speeds. For example, only 9% of respondents indicated feeling comfortable riding on a major street with several lanes of traffic with speeds of 35 to 40 miles per hour, but 50% indicated feeling at least somewhat comfortable on the same street if it had a striped bike lane, and 78% indicated they would feel at least somewhat comfortable if the street had a wide bicycle lane separated from traffic by a raised curb.

## **Helmet Use**

- **About 50% of bicycle riders said they wear a helmet at least half of the time, but usage varied by age of rider.**

Overall, 43% of bicycle riders reported always or almost always wearing a helmet, and 58% said they wore a helmet at least some of the time, but 42% said they never wear a helmet. Reported near constant helmet use was highest among bike riders aged 65 and older (61%) and lowest among riders aged 18 to 24 years (20%).