

# Findings from a Survey of State Bicycle and Pedestrian Professionals

## Methods

State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinators and Alternative Transportation Coordinators serve as a leaders for planning, encouraging, and supporting walking and bicycling in their state. Typically housed in a state department of transportation, these professionals implement policies, legislation, engineer solutions, develop educational programming, oversee funding for state projects and connect with relevant partners to promote positive change.

In Fall 2023, state Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinators (n=50) and state Alternative Transportation Coordinators (n=50) were emailed an invitation to participate in a survey about their state's efforts, policies and programming. Twenty one states responded to the survey. These results are presented as a summary of all responses, specific state's contributions and outcomes are not identified to protect the anonymity of those who participated.

## How to use these findings

These findings can serve as a conversation point for practitioners and professionals to examine current roles, scope of practice and expertise and common challenges across the country. Interested stakeholders may also use these findings to determine the kinds of training that could benefit this population.



## Who Participated

- Representatives from 21 states, geographically dispersed
- 85.7% were the state bike/ped coordinator
- 60% were male
- 87% were Non-Hispanic White
- 38% had a Masters degree or higher
- The most common type of degree was urban planning
- Average number of years in their current position: 4.43 years

## What duties do State Bicycle/Pedestrian professionals perform?

We asked respondents to indicate what their typical responsibilities were and how often they participated in them.

### Daily activities

- Among respondents, 42% reported **infrastructure planning** was something they did daily.
- One third indicated that **grant management** or **community engagement** and **relationship building** were common activities and 29% reported **policy development, revision and updating** were daily activities.

### Monthly activities

- Data-related activities were reported to often take place on a monthly basis: 33% indicated **data collection** and 47% indicated that **data analysis and synthesis** was a monthly activity .
- **Community engagement and relationship building** were reported as a monthly activity for 47% of respondents and 33% indicated that grant **management and implementation** took place monthly.
- **Educational activities for professionals** took place monthly (29%) or every few months (29%).

### “Not my Job”

Among activities that respondents said were not a part of their typical duties; 52% said that curriculum development for walking or biking programs was not their responsibility and 48% indicated that grant writing was not in their job description. Another 24% indicated that developing campaigns to promote walking and biking were not their responsibility.

## What kinds of expertise do state bicycle/ professionals have access to?

Respondents indicated what types of expertise they have available to them in their office.

- 90% indicated they have expertise in transportation engineering.
- 81% said that they had both public policy or policy development and data collection/analysis expertise in their office.
- 76% reported urban planning expertise.
- The least commonly reported expertise within their office was public health (4%) and community organizing (7%) but the majority indicated that they could access this area of expertise through state government partners.
- When asked what gaps in expertise their office said, the most common response (19%) was directed to a lack of funding for additional expertise.

## Characteristics of Responding States

State Level Characteristics	Number Reporting (%)
<b>State bicycle Plan</b>	
No plan	3 (14.3)
Published within last 5 years	10 (47.6)
Published within last 6-10 years	6 (28.6)
Published within last 11-15 years	1 (4.8)
Published 16+ years ago	1 (4.8)
<b>Federal transportation funds spent on bicycle or pedestrian projects</b>	
0-0.5%	2 (9.5)
0.6-1.0%	1 (4.8)
1.1-1.5%	2 (9.5)
1.6-2.0%	2 (9.5)
2.1%-2.5%	5 (23.8)
More than 2.5%	1 (4.8)
Unsure	8 (38.0)
<b>State Level Complete Streets Policy</b>	
No policy	7 (33.3)
Legislative ordinance	5 (23.8)
Resolution	1 (4.8)
Internal design policy	2 (9.5)
Executive order	1 (4.8)
State Law	1 (4.8)
Currently being revised	2 (9.5)
Currently being developed	1 (4.8)
<b>Bicycle Safety Emphasis Area</b>	
No	5 (23.8)
Yes	9 (42.9)
Unsure	7 (33.3)
<b>League of American Bicyclists State Level Ranking</b>	
Ranked 1-10	4 (19)
Ranked 11-20	7 (33.3)
Ranked 21-30	3 (14.3)
Ranked 31-40	4 (19)
Ranked 41-50	2 (9.5)

### Did you know?

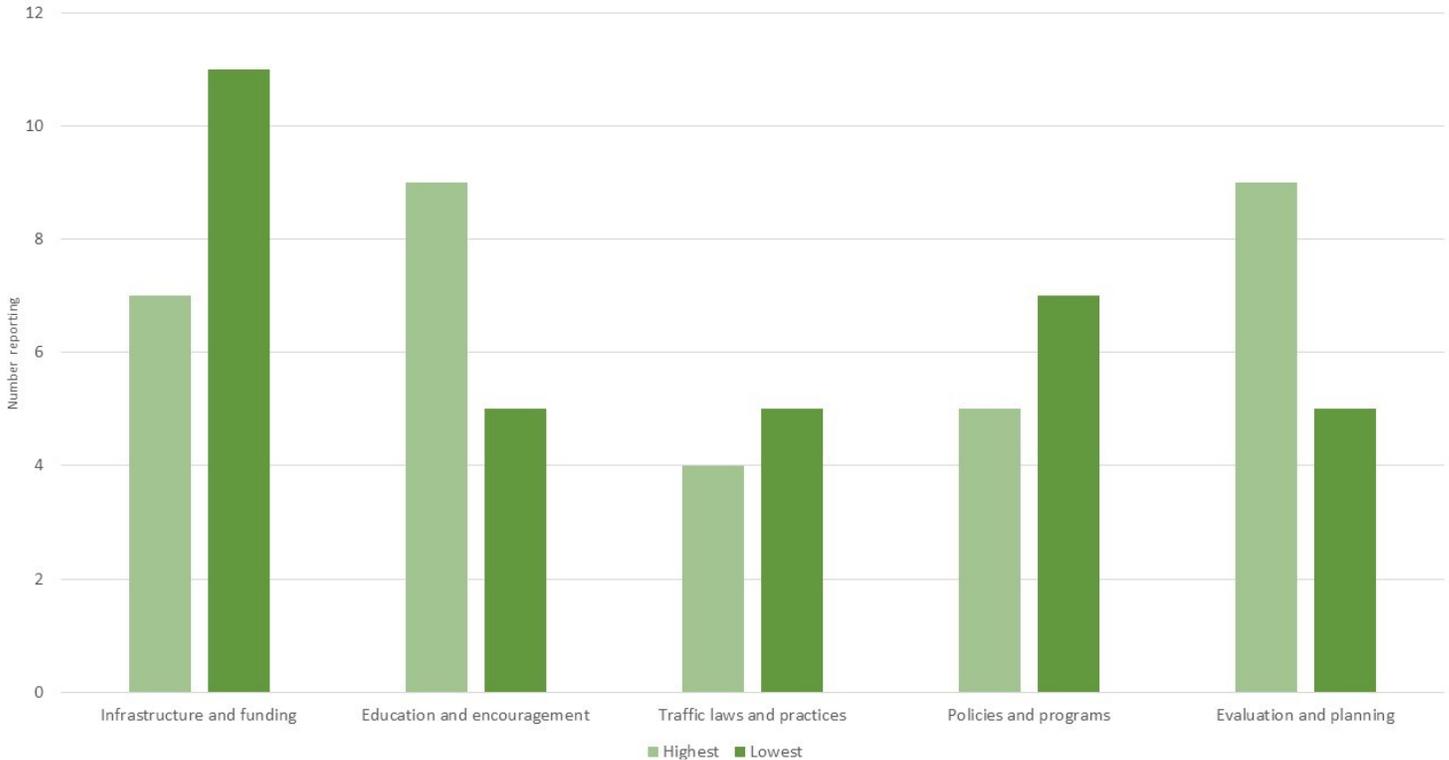
Some of the earliest state bicycle and pedestrian programs began in departments of transportation in CA, NC, MN and OR, originally starting as an individual or two-person office. Federal Level Policy in the 1990's led to the spread of these offices throughout the United States. <sup>1,2</sup>

## Reflections on the rankings from the League

Respondents were asked to report what areas their states were ranked highest and lowest in from the [League of American Bicyclists \(LAB\) State Report Cards](#) and then asked to reflect on:

- What contributed to their highest ranking area?
- What additional things would they like to improve upon?
- In areas that they did not do well, what could be done to improve their ranking?

Highest and lowest rankings from the LAB

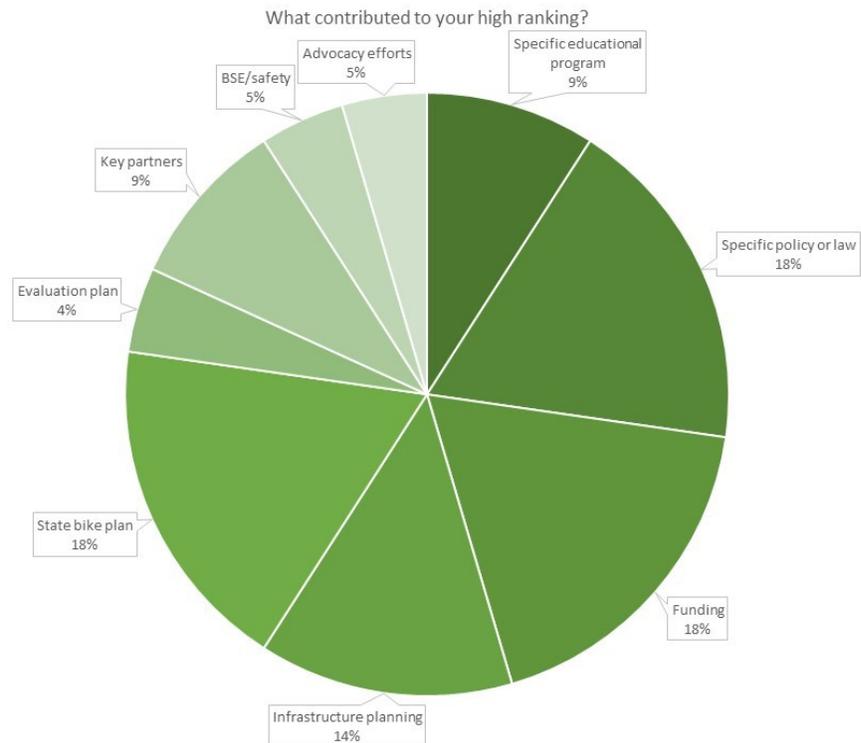


## Findings

States were most highly ranked in education and encouragement as well as evaluation and planning.

States reported their lowest rankings in infrastructure and funding.

Respondents pointed to a specific policy/law or the funding for bike/ped in their state as a strong contributor to their highest rankings.



## The Road Ahead: What can be improved?

Respondents had many ideas on how their state could improve their LAB ranking:

*"Our Complete Streets law has no funding, and it only applies to the state Department of Transportation (DOT). We should expand it to all road agencies and add funding."*

*"Traffic laws related to bicyclist safety and practices for automated enforcement and preventing racial disparities in traffic law enforcement."*

*"More trails planning and coordination, more staff dedicated to bike ped planning, more green infrastructure planning and design"*

*"5 foot passing laws, complete standards, land use planning, additional funding for active transportation projects, restrictions/limitations on capacity projects"*

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*"We are striving for more equitable transportation investments, but it is always an area that we need to improve on. We have robust complete streets legislation, but there are funding challenges and improvements outside of population centers that can be important as well."*

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## Areas of Opportunity: What are the next steps?

Respondents reflected on the areas where their state was ranked low and what could be targeted for improvement:

*"Our state does not have a yield to pedestrians law. That would be a great place to start."*

*"Developing stronger relationships with other offices in our DOT is crucial to our office's success. Without partnerships, our programs would not run properly or at all."*

*"Start a safe routes to school program. Additional funds for the [Funding Organization's] grant program that funds education campaigns."*

*"in 2021 our state pulled out of the Transportation Climate Initiative, a multi-state initiative to cut carbon emissions in the transportation sector."*

*"More spending on bike ped infrastructure, better education on laws"*

*"increase funding to in-school bike safety/skills education program"*

*"Funding more bicycle/pedestrian projects in DOT right-of-way, reducing speeds on the highway system"*

## Targeting underserved and under Resourced populations: What are states doing?

Respondents reported what their office was doing to target walking and biking in specific populations.

Group	Responses
Older Adults	<p>“Our office updated our state bike route network last year to focus more on urban areas where those aged 50 or more are more likely to be riding more often. People want to do utilitarian trips on bikes in towns and cities and our new map reflects this latent demand.”</p> <p>“Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board comprised of members representing statewide healthy aging collaborative.”</p>
Children	<p>“Safe Route to School (SRTS) education in schools, and bike rodeos with partnership with Bicycle Coalition of [State].”</p> <p>“We fund an instructor to do in-school safety and skills classes.”</p> <p>“We provide strong funding for SRTS and the legislature is now funding a Statewide School-Based Bicycle Safety Education Program.”</p> <p>“Funding traffic gardens across the state.”</p>
Rural Populations	<p>“Bicycle Coalition of [State] programming available to all rural and urban parts of [State], including rural schools and community events. [State] DOT regional planners focus on rural community safety and Active Transportation in recent years.”</p> <p>“We are partnering with our tourism department for a rural biking program that creates routes to encourage biking in rural areas. Three of our programs build sidewalks every year which cyclists can use.”</p> <p>“Our Pedestrian and Bicycle Program, SRTS program, and Connecting Communities Program all have a strong equity and geographic diversity component. This helps with infrastructure, but not promotion.”</p> <p>“Funding programs and policies to advance equitable communities by proactively earmarking funding for underserved communities, often in rural areas.”</p>
Women	<p>“Emphasis on dedicated facilities. <i>Girls in Gear</i> training to focus on women biking and empowerment.”</p> <p>“Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board comprised of members representing statewide advocacy groups promoting cycling among women.”</p>
Low-income Populations	<p>“Past program to engage with vulnerable populations about safe walking and biking.”</p> <p>“We have performed extensive analyses to identify these communities and are working towards education and infrastructure campaigns to improve the cycling experience in these areas.”</p> <p>“Equity is identified through Geographic Information Systems and points awarded in underserved communities towards grants.”</p>
Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations	<p>“Funding programs and policies to advance equitable communities by proactively earmarking funding for underserved communities.”</p> <p>“Our Pedestrian and Bicycle Program, SRTS program, and Connecting Communities Program all have a strong equity component which includes people of color and tribes as a factor.”</p> <p>“Past program to engage with vulnerable populations about safe walking and biking. Bicycle Coalition of [State] programming available to all communities.”</p>

## What are the barriers for improving efforts to target underserved and under resourced populations ?

“Difficulties with consistent engagement, and identifying the best way to build partnerships with vulnerable populations and community leaders to help support our safety education.”

“No dedicated funding and lack of our state legislature's support for our state Department of Transportation to do such things.”

“Staff capacity and funding. We have very limited staff capacity at the state level to do bike/ped promotional or educational activities, and a small budget. I am working to update our website and start a bicycling themed educational webinar series, but right now we are not doing a lot in this area. We work a lot with our cycling advocacy groups to reach these groups, but don't do a lot directly.”

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*“We need resources about how to best engage with vulnerable populations and how to provide engagement and training about safety when it may not be welcomed or wanted.”*

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## What do states need to address the needs of these populations better?

“We have identified these populations. But we are struggling with implementation on ways to better serve these communities. I weigh my Safe Routes to School Programs to benefit disadvantaged communities. Law enforcement is concerned about their image in performing enforcement in these areas. They also recognize that they cannot enforce their way into getting people to comply. So they are focusing more on education programs.”

“We haven't had strong education efforts over the last few years, but are hoping to restart. We rely a lot on our partnerships with our bicycling advocacy groups - they do an amazing job of promoting cycling. We are working to provide better resources and do more educational activities but have been understaffed to do this.”

“Biking counts; without knowing where people are riding, it is difficult to encourage more. Instead we use GIS models and surveys to estimate where the latent demand is for biking.”

## What did we learn?

This study of state bicycle/pedestrian professionals from a geographically dispersed sample yielded some important findings that can be used to improve the scope of impact of state-level offices.

- Though states reported different issues, there were many consistencies across respondents including challenges with funding, policy-making and the ability to reach different groups.
- Though the types of expertise and skills were diverse, there were some notable areas that could be targeted for improvement.
- Challenges remain for states to equitably reach all residents with walking and biking initiatives.
- Stakeholders can use these findings to develop training programs, toolkits to help provide resources to professionals, or target funding opportunities.

## Our Lab

The Physical Activity and Public Health lab in the department of Kinesiology at Penn State University is directed by Dr. Melissa Bopp. The lab has had a long standing focus on active transportation and have published many papers on active transportation participation rates, influences on active travel, policy and programming related to walking and biking, and environmental factors. [You can visit our lab website to learn more about our research.](#)

For more information

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Please email Dr. Melissa Bopp at [mjb73@psu.edu](mailto:mjb73@psu.edu).

We would like to thank the participants of this study who volunteered their time and expertise to answer this survey.

