

Rural and Small Communities: *Building Support for Biking and Walking*



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Challenges in working in rural areas or small communities

- What is a “rural” area?
- USCB definition: All areas outside census places with 2,500 or more people.



Challenges in working in rural areas or small communities

Tennessee

Three rural definitions based on Census Places

Rural locations are those outside Census Places with a population...

...greater than or equal to 2,500
 Outside Census Places \geq 2,500 people

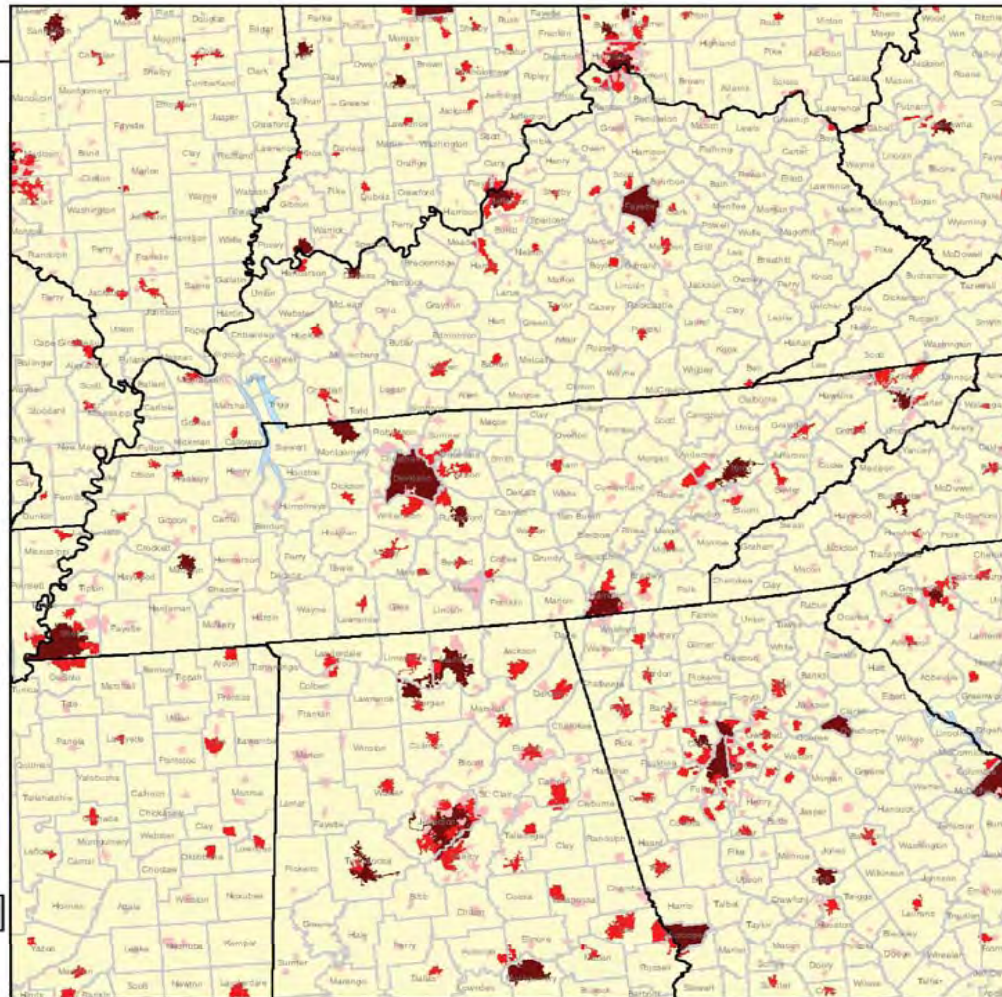
...greater than or equal to 10,000
 Outside Census Places \geq 2,500 people
 Census Places: 2,500 - 9,999

...greater than or equal to 50,000
 Outside Census Places \geq 2,500 people
 Census Places: 2,500 - 9,999
 Census Places: 10,000 - 49,999

Urban locations under all three definitions:

Census Places: \geq 50,000 people

For more information on definitions, see documentation



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Wisconsin

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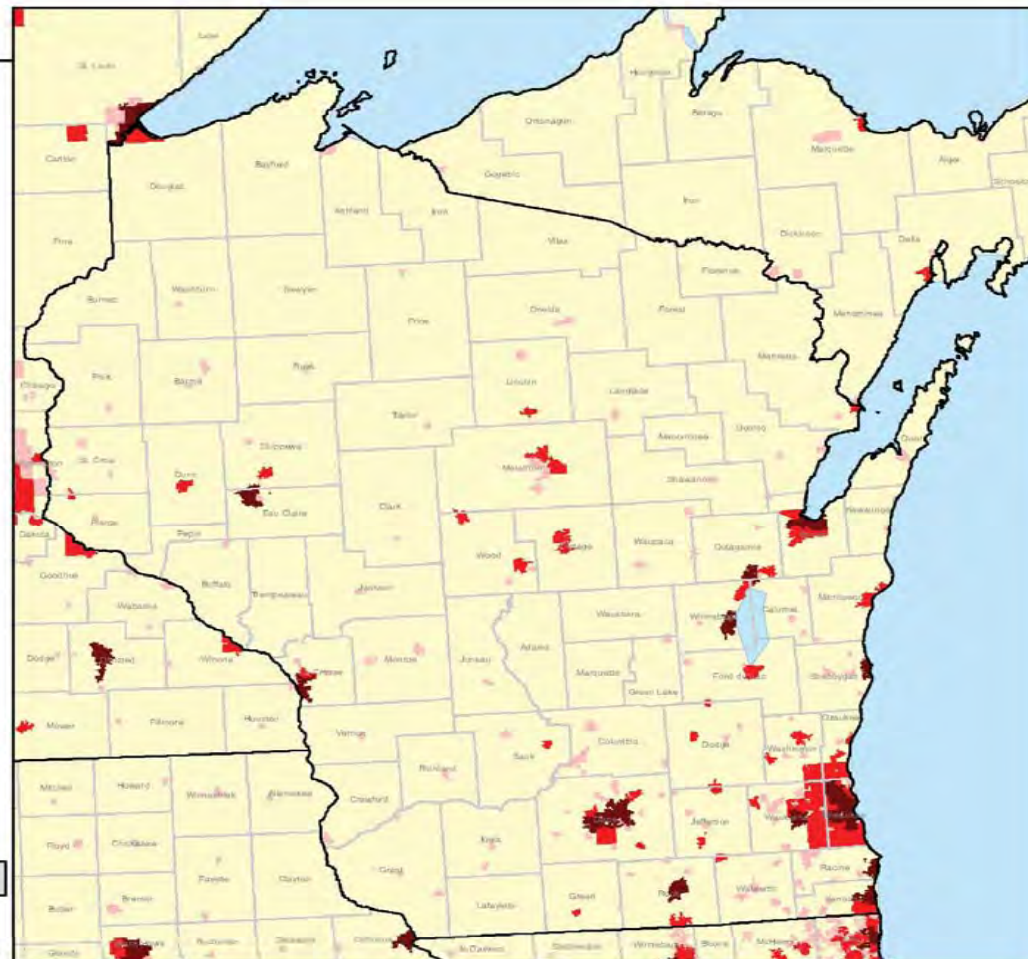
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Using the USCB definition

- 87.7 million Americans live in areas defined as rural
- That is 31% of the US population
- And accounts for 97% of US land area



Challenges in working in rural areas or small communities



Photo: Martin Pozzi, Marin County, California Farm Bureau Federation Photo Contest 2003



Photo: Sharon Alkus, Tulare County, California Farm Bureau Federation Photo Contest 2005

Challenges in working in rural areas or small communities



Lack of staff dedicated to bicycling and walking issues

Challenges in working in rural areas or small communities



Land use and distance between destinations

Challenges in working in rural areas or small communities



Lack of biking and walking culture

Challenges in working in rural areas or small communities



Difficult to get the word out

Challenges in working in rural areas or small communities



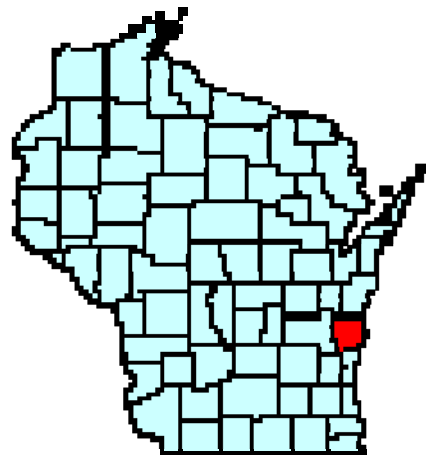
Or, sometimes you don't want the word out yet, but because it's a small town it gets out

Best Approaches to Use With Rural Communities or Small Towns from a Sheboygan County Perspective



Sheboygan County, WI – One of the four pilot program communities

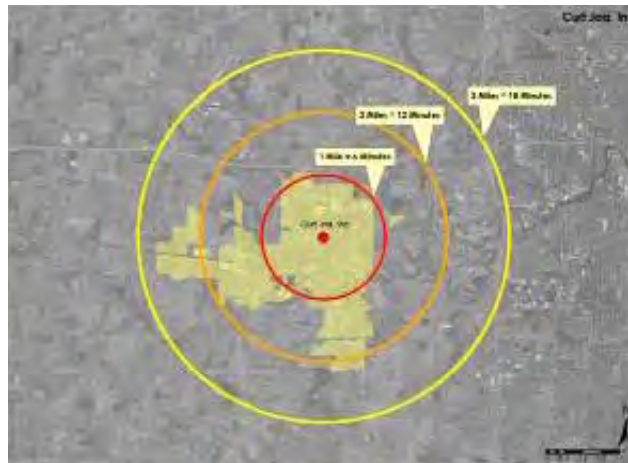
- 114,000 population
- City of Sheboygan => 50,000
- 1 Hour North of Milwaukee, 1 Hour South of Green Bay, 1 Hour East Fox Cities
- Blue Collar Workforce => Kohler Co., Bemis Mfg., Sargento, Johnsonville



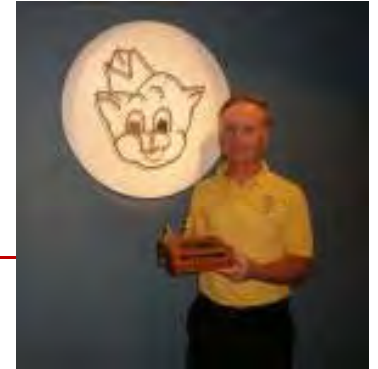
Be Ready to Spend Time Educating, Sell the Product

After four years, we're still educating

- We have a great recreational contingent of riders, but hard to get them to jump to utilitarian riding
- Many have never considered riding a bike for anything but recreation
- No congestion, so why not drive?
- Ample parking, so why not drive?
- We sell proximity and the health aspect



Collaborate



Bring everyone to the table, everyone:

- Local non-profits (i.e., Red Cross, Health Coalitions, Bike/Ped Clubs/Coalitions, etc.)
- Statewide non-profits (i.e., Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Walks, APBP)
- Employers (Wellness Coordinators are a good “in”)
- Merchants
- State Bike/Ped Coordinator & SRTS Coordinator
- Obvious ones such as local & regional planning agencies, engineering depts., DPW’s
- Local hospitals & health-care providers
- School districts
- Local environmental groups
- Churches
- Local ethnic organizations
- Local senior organizations
- Chamber of Commerce



Get out there

Public outreach is key => Present/table whenever you can

- Brownbags at employers
- Kiwanis, Lion's, Rotary, etc.
- Local festivals
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Health fairs
- Local radio interviews
- Local public access TV stations
- Ask local paper for a column
- Present to local elected councils



Conduct Local Workshops

Walking & Biking Workshops

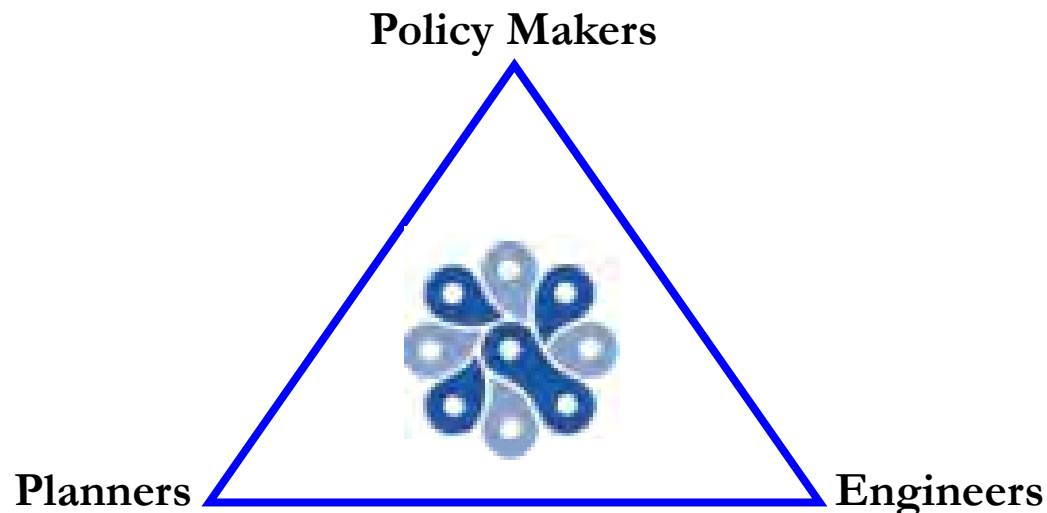
- Involve decision makers and engineers =>
Sometimes find that there is a feeling among these folks that everything is okay when in reality it is not
- Involve police representatives especially those interested in community policing
- Involve the school district, especially those in charge of routing busing, identifying hazardous areas, etc.
- Much easier to explain yourself if those your explaining to have witnessed things first-hand
- If nothing else, we've found it useful to have large maps laid out at different events and tell visitors to mark up where they feel there are problem areas



Organize a fact-finding tour

Go somewhere else & get an outside perspective

- If you can afford it, or find a grant opportunity, travel to Netherlands/Germany/Denmark to see how a fully integrated bike/ped system works
- Travel domestically to cities investing in bike/ped => Gets rid of the comment/idea that it cannot work domestically
- Bring planners, engineers, and policy-makers together...although the first two might be the best focus



Know your friends

Get to know the right people

- If a County initiative, get to know the highway commissioner
 - Even though typically “road-minded,” they can help you if you get them to buy-in
- City/Village/Town Clerk can be a great resource in guiding you to the correct people
- State bike/ped coordinator can help with your projects and guide you to potential grants
- Get to know local players like the economic development cooperation; they can help get support from local leaders/staff
- Find those that are already “walking-the-walk” (i.e., in our case a local coffee shop)
- Get the bike shops involved, although getting them to think non-recreationally can be a challenge
- Even people you might not think as being into bike/ped issues should not be ignored (i.e., in our case we found a great partner in our local art center)



Where has all this taken Sheboygan County?

Four years and what have we done?

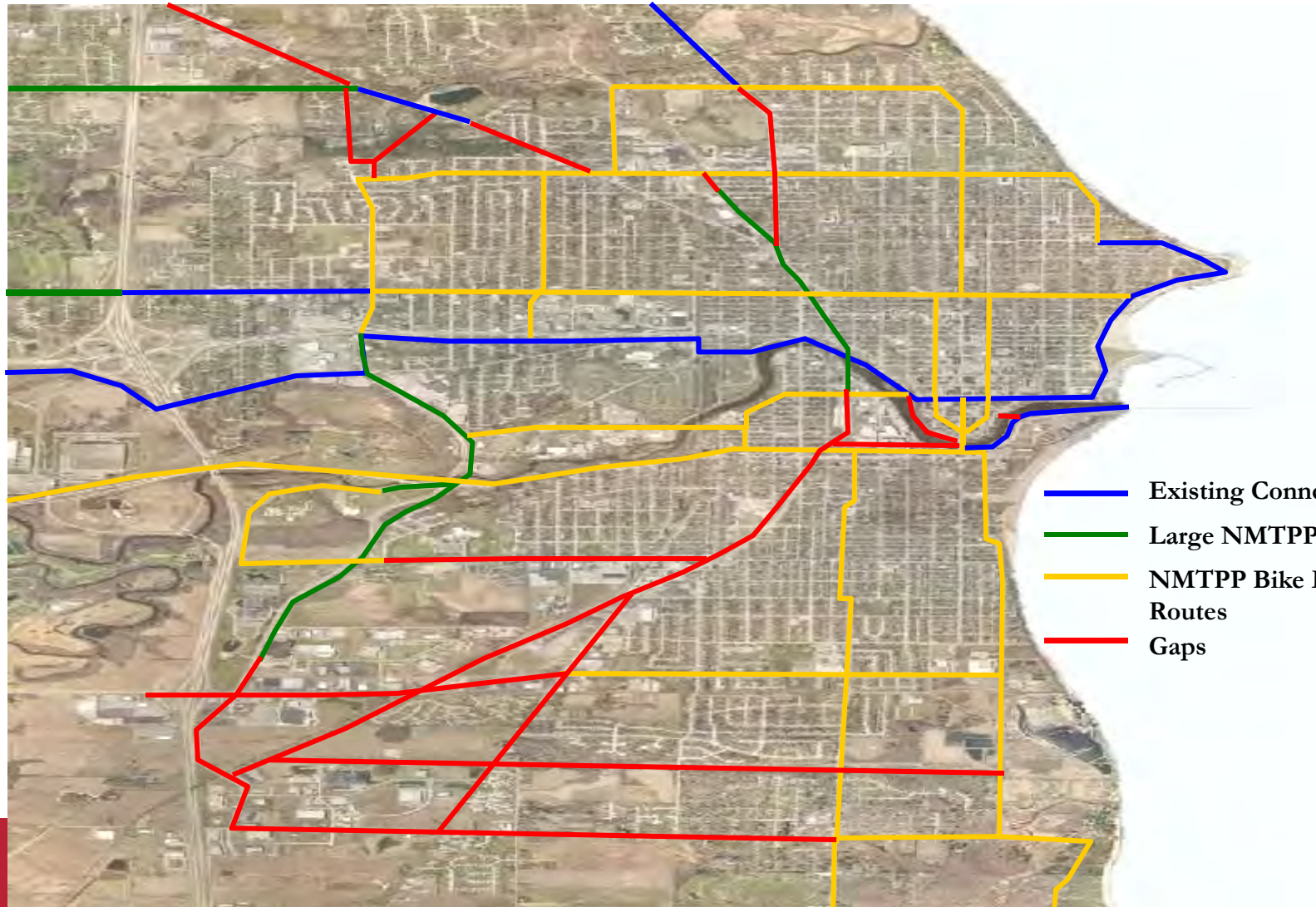
- Great partnerships between local municipalities, employers, merchants, and other local agencies
- 27 infrastructure projects including: multi-use pathways (approx. 14 CL miles), bike lanes (approx. 45 CL miles), and sidewalk gap projects (approx. 7 miles)
- 2010 vs. 2009 B.O.B.'s are up roughly 41% thus far (781 vs. 555) though overall ridership has decreased
- 20 manual count sites throughout the County => Warm months (April thru August) '08 thru '10 we see an average increase of +15% bike/ped traffic
- '00 Census shows 3.8%, '07 ACS shows 4.2%, & '08 ACS shows 6.0% of Sheboyganites walking/biking for their commutes
- '09 Intercept survey on one of our urban trails shows 23% use it for utilitarian trips and 52% of the users spend money while using the trail (out of 555 responses)



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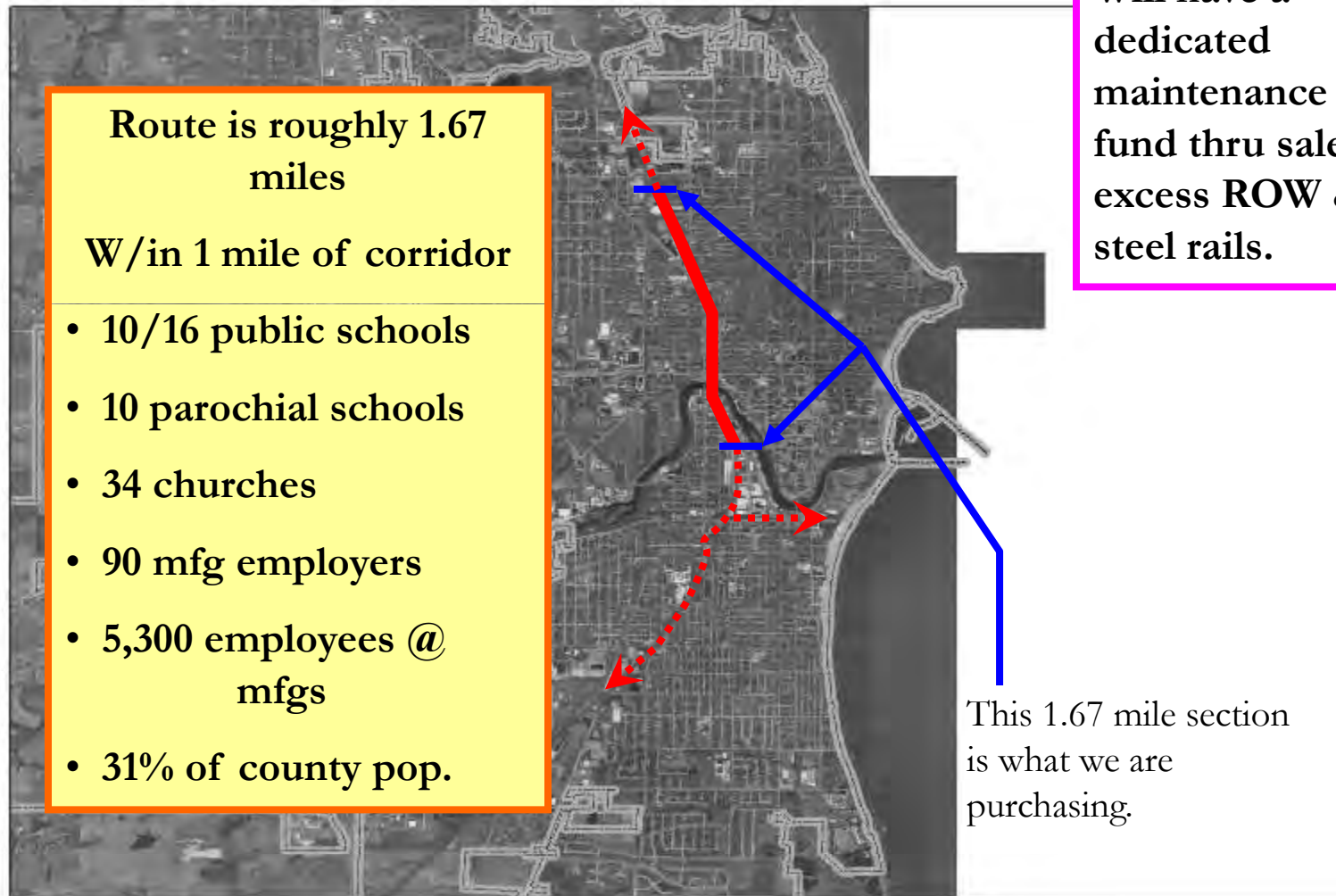
City of Sheboygan Network

No Gas Required



- Existing Connections
- Large NMTTP Projects
- NMTTP Bike Lanes & Routes
- Gaps

Where has all this taken Sheboygan County?



Where has all this taken Sheboygan County?



Where has all this taken Sheboygan County?



Route is roughly 3.0 Miles

W/in 1 Mile

- **10 Schools w/ 2633 kids**
- **21 Churches**
- **69 Mfg Employers**
- **6,000 Employees**
- **20% of County Pop.**

Where has all this taken Sheboygan County?

- Safe Routes to School Program – Bike Federation of Wisconsin
- Bike & Walk to Work Week – Bike Federation of Wisconsin (2008), County Staff (2009, 2010)
- Walk to School Days – County Staff
- Bike Corrals – County Staff



Where has all this taken Sheboygan County?

Safe Routes to School Program

- Bike safety training course taught at local middle schools
- ID'd hazardous & problematic areas within ½ mile of each county public school & then recommended countermeasures



Safety Training – Farnsworth



Audits - Can see school from new neighborhood, but have to be bussed because no way to get there. Horizon - Plymouth

Where has all this taken Sheboygan County?

Bike and Walk to Work Week

- Two events to date. Great participation from many of area's large employers.
- 2009 event witnessed a 45% increase in bike/walk traffic compared to previous month, and 47% increase in bike/walk traffic compared to 2008.



Where has all this taken Sheboygan County?

Walk to School Days and Bike Corrals

- Typically see about 40-50% of County schools participate in Walk to School Days
- Staff sets up corrals at 6-7 summer events



Questions?



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