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Best Cities For Cycling: Most Improved Runners-Up

Most Improved: Runners-Up

These cities are close to the best

By Brian Fiske

Minneapolis

Among the 50 largest U.S. cities, Minneapolis is second only to Portland, Oregon, in the percentage of people who bike to work (2.4 percent compared with Portland's 3.5 percent, according to U.S. census data). The city received \$21.5 million as part of the Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program, which sprang from the 2005 federal transportation bill, so the number of bike commuters is sure to grow--as long as some of the money is spent to help spread the word that bike lanes and paths already exist.

"We're really good at spending money to build things, but there's almost no money to tell people how to use a facility, or even that the facility exists," explains local cyclist Gary Sjoquist, director of government relations for Bikes Belong and director of advocacy for Quality Bicycle Products, a Minneapolis-area bike parts distribution company. "For example, more than a hundred thousand people drive on the freeway over the Midtown Greenway [a 5.7-mile trail often used by bike commuters] every day, and probably 95 percent of those drivers don't know that the bike trail is even there."

San Jose, California

With a near-perfect climate, relatively flat landscape, almost 200 miles of bike lanes and paths, nine bike/pedestrian freeway overcrossings, bike-friendly buses and commuter trains, pilot programs for bike-friendly stop lights, detailed bike-route signs and a city employee bike fleet, San Jose has earned a place in the bike-friendly-city arena. "If you put San Jose on the East Coast, people would think it was a mecca of cycling," says Andy Clarke, executive director of the League of American Bicyclists. "But because it's on the West Coast, in the shadow of San Francisco and other places, expectations are quite a bit higher." The city plans to connect more of its bike network--"It's a work in progress and there are some gaps in it," admits John Brazil, the city's bike coordinator--but from what we see, that's San Jose's only remaining shortcoming. [Click here to find rides in San Jose](http://www.bicycling.com/sanjose)

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