



The wheels are turning in Wichita

Now that bike lanes have made their mark on 1st and 2nd Streets in Wichita, David Sultzman feels more comfortable on two wheels with his sons, 11-year-old Justus and 9-year-old Isaiah.

When the weather permits, the boys bike to and from College Hill Elementary School.

"What's nice now with the bike lanes is I'm feeling safer that they have a place to ride rather than cars pushing them into the curb," Sultzman says. "They only ride about two and a half blocks, but still, I feel safer."

Bike-friendly policies are gaining some traction in the Wichita area, thanks in part to Kansas Health Foundation funding for the local Health and Wellness Coalition.



New avenues

The coalition was formed years ago with the help of the Kansas Health Foundation, and it strives to encourage physical activity and healthy eating habits. In 2008, the Kansas Health Foundation set aside \$300,000 for the coalition to promote health and wellness activities in Wichita.



One of the coalition's goals was to make it easier for Wichitans to walk and bike.

Today, not only do some Wichita streets have bike lanes, but racks on city buses transport more than 1,000 bicycles per week, according to Mike Vinson, transportation director for the city of Wichita.

"We have new avenues for bikers," says Mim McKenzie, chair of the Health and Wellness Coalition of Wichita. "Our transportation options are growing tremendously. It's through small little changes, not through big policy shifts. The downtown plan is surrounded by the concept of transportation being other than a car – bikes and walking and making sure that kind of transportation is available."



A safe surprise

In May, the coalition used some funding to celebrate National Bike Month. The group bought safety vests, bike helmets and bike locks, and then coalition members waited at school bike racks to surprise the young riders when they came out. "We gave them those things just to say, 'Way to be healthy. Way to choose a healthy lifestyle,'" McKenzie says.

"We gave those to one little girl, and her mother was there and just started crying because she said, 'We did not have the money to purchase these things, and I know she needs them,'" McKenzie says. Sultzman, who lives in the College Hill area, sees many more people biking now that the nearby bike lanes are available. "Especially on the weekends, I'll see big groups of bikes – eight or nine bikes at a time – go by, and it's a frequency that I've never seen before prior to the bike path," he says.

"I think it's probably one of the most progressive and wonderful things that Wichita has done for health in a long time."



David Sultzman bikes with his sons Justus and Isaiah.



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Kansas Health Foundation



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Wichita's streets are safer for city cyclists these days thanks to the Health and Wellness Coalition and funding from Kansas Health Foundation.

With the help of grant money from Kansas Health Foundation, the coalition has managed to incorporate some big changes around the city, including dedicated bike lanes and racks on public buses.

It's all part of an effort to promote healthy transportation alternatives for Wichitans – and it's catching on. Read on to learn how.



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