



# Sheboygan County, Wis.

## PROFILE:

POPULATION: 115,562  
MEDIAN INCOME: \$50,905  
MEDIAN HOME VALUE: \$155,600  
% W/ BACHELORS DEGREE: 14.4%

## STATISTICS:

### Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program Results:

- Walking has increased 61% from 2007 to 2011
- 1,500 bike parking spaces have been added
- The Eastern Avenue project produced an 80% increase in pedestrian traffic
- 30+ miles of NTPP funded bicycle lanes and routes are on the ground

## QUOTES:

*"He approached me and said, 'What do you think about a road diet and some curb bump-outs?' That would never have happened a few years ago."*

—AARON BRAULT, Sheboygan County Planning and Conservation Department

*"This rails-to-trails project is a great example of people working together in our community. The trail travels through one of the densest portions of the City of Sheboygan, and is sure to be a great asset to both residents of our county and also our visitors."*

—ROGER TE STROETE, Sheboygan County Board Chairman

*"Biking to work is a great way to plan the day ahead when I head to work and unwind when heading home."*

—JIM VAN AKKEREN, Sheboygan County Deputy District Attorney



## A PILOT PROJECT LANDS ON TWO FEET

Sheboygan County, Wis. (pop. 115,000), on the shores of Lake Michigan, is one of four communities chosen as a [pilot project](#) to showcase what can be accomplished by focused federal investment to shift short driving trips to biking and walking. (Columbia, Mo.; Minneapolis, Minn.; and Marin County, Calif., are the other participants in the Bike/Walk Pilot Program launched by the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, passed with bipartisan congressional support and signed by President George W. Bush.)

Sheboygan County is the most rural of the pilots, with a large share of its population traveling less than three miles to work and school by car. Some neighborhoods are bisected by wide roads, one small community removed its sidewalks in the 1980s, and the only way to cross the Sheboygan River, which cuts an east-west chasm through town, is on one of three high-speed, north-south roadways. Yet Sheboygan is poised to experience extraordinary benefit from its pilot program status because there is so much room to demonstrate growth. The very first step in Sheboygan's pilot journey was the creation of a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan.

"The whole community is on board," says Aaron Brault, director of the county's Planning and Conservation Department. Since the start of the Bike/Walk Pilot, bike racks have been installed on city buses, a Safe Routes to School program has been adopted, and traffic-calming measures have been deployed within a half-mile of 12 elementary and middle schools. In 2008, the Sheboygan County Board of Supervisors designated—for the first time and with allocated funding—the advancement of bicycling and walking as one of its top priorities.

One of the county's biggest undertakings is a 3.5-mile multi-use path that will welcome non-motorists on one of the few Sheboygan River crossings. "Retrofitting is never the easiest or least expensive way to go," says Brault. "We have to deal with a river crossing,

**RESOURCES:**

NTPP website  
Continuing the Momentum in Sheboygan

**FOR MORE INFORMATION****CONTACT:**

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
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railroad crossings, lots of retaining walls.” Undeterred and inspired, Brault has his sights on something even bigger: a potential 4- to 2-lane reduction and linear parkway creation on the main roadway connecting the village of Kohler (home of the area’s largest employer) with the city of Sheboygan’s downtown—and the homes of 50 to 60 percent of the Kohler Company workforce.

For Brault, though, the most telling sign that the Bike/Walk Pilot is effecting positive change in his community can be found in a recent conversation with the city engineer who was redoing an intersection. “He approached me and said, ‘What do you think about a road diet and some curb bump-outs?’ That would never have happened a few years ago.”

Walking is up 61 percent from 2007 to 2011 in a county whose largest town is just over 50,000. This sizable jump happened thanks to a high level of collaboration by the business community, police departments, school districts and citizens in each town and village to promote active transportation. Sixty miles of bike lanes have been built throughout the 500-square-mile county. In addition, 1,700 bike parking spaces have been added, and all buses are equipped with racks. A Safe Routes to School program has been developed along with the ReBike Project, which gets donated bikes into the hands of people in need.

Patience and persistence are paying off in Sheboygan—groundbreaking on the Union Pacific Rail-Trail, the future centerpiece of the county bike network, began in June of 2013. In less than two miles, this [critical facility](#) will link 31% of the City of Sheboygan’s population, 10 out of 16 public schools, 53 churches, and ~80 employers. Once complete, this corridor through the heart of Sheboygan will be reactivated by active transportation, one step and pedal at a time.