

Watch for Me NC 2014 in Carrboro

Background

Carrboro is a town of 20,000 residents nicknamed the “Paris of the Piedmont.” Located next to Chapel Hill, many UNC-Chapel Hill students, faculty and staff live in Carrboro, and travel to the university by bike, transit or on foot. The city has the highest bicycle mode share in the state (about 4 percent), and is the only League of American Bicyclists Bike-Friendly Community in North Carolina with a silver rating. These accolades demonstrate Carrboro’s commitment to the safety and accessibility of non-motorized transportation. While these efforts are impressive, there is continued work to be done in Carrboro. The town acknowledges that ensuring safe pedestrian behavior continues to be a struggle; “pedestrian failure to yield” has been a common cause of crashes in recent years. In 2014, the Watch For Me program in Carrboro focused on the high-traffic bikeways and main streets of the town to address this issue.

Partnerships

The Carrboro Planning Department works closely with several partners to implement the WFM program, and two officers have completed the Bicycle Traffic skills course taught by LCI Steve Goodridge. The Police Department held enforcement activities on bicycling safety; they stopped cyclists without lights, distributed bike lights, participated in our Kidical Mass rides, and educated residents about safety. Two area non-profit organizations—the Carrboro Bicycle Coalition and ReCyclery—participated as well by contributing volunteers to WFM events and conducting independent safety efforts that included WFM materials.

Education and Enforcement Activities Conducted

Carrboro WFM partners participated in several local events in 2014, including open houses, community events and targeted brochure handouts. The Carrboro Police Department also used Facebook to conduct outreach about events and share safe road behavior practices. In fall 2014, Carrboro executed nine enforcement operations, issuing 40 warnings to road users. The Police Department specifically informed many cyclists about the importance of riding with lights at night.

Key Outcomes

The key success to Carrboro’s WFM program is the institutionalization of enforcement. Since 2009, the town has conducted two enforcements per month, year round, and has also conducted least one brochure handout per month. This consistent presence of enforcement holds drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians all accountable for their behavior on a regular basis, and it sets an expectation for safe road use.

In the last year, Carrboro has also seen improvements in the municipal ordinances related to bicycling. Amendments to the Town Code endorsed by local bicycling advocates were passed, related to both riding abreast and rider spacing on roadways.

Lessons Learned

- Acknowledge good behavior: In addition to conducting enforcement actions, Carrboro used the WFM program to identify safety cycling behavior. In spring 2015, cyclists riding safely will be provided “good cyclist vouchers” for ice cream at Market St. Coffee.
- Rotate enforcement locations: The Carrboro Police Department conducts enforcement activities at several different sites throughout the town. The diversity of sites both helps to raise awareness about safe driving and non-motorized behavior, but also helps to avoid criticism so places aren’t “over-targeted.”

Credit

Thank you to Sgt. Billy Austin with the Carrboro Police Department and Tina Moon, Planning Administrator with the Carrboro Planning Department, for providing leadership, time and expertise that contributed to the Watch for Me NC Campaign in Carrboro and the writing of this profile.