



**WHAT MOVES YOU?
Transportation Options in Greater Cincinnati**

Every day, most of us get to work, run by the grocery store or meet friends without ever thinking twice about how we arrive at our destination. For many, travelling through our community is as routine as hitting a light switch.



Transportation is about moving people and goods from one point to another – point A to point B – safely and easily. Transportation in the Greater Cincinnati area can be described as auto-centric. Many people rely on cars to get to work, school, appointments, recreation and other activities of daily living. To get around in the region, in addition to private automobiles, other means of transportation include: public transit, bicycles and walking. Each has advantages and disadvantages, upsides and downsides, benefits and detriments. How well each method functions and how well it connects with other forms of transportation can influence the area’s economic, environmental and community health and vitality as well as its land use and development.

Each transportation mode uses infrastructure funded with public money. The interstate system is funded primarily with federal money from the Federal Highway Trust Fund; transit buses may be purchased with federal dollars and local match but are operated with local money. Communities make decisions about how much to invest in these various modes of transportation and what is the appropriate or desirable balance, that is, how much of each mode ought to be available. Travelers make decisions about which mode to use and/or purchase. Providers of goods and services make decisions about which mode to use and/or purchase based in part on cost and time. These decisions affect community and individual quality of life and health. How is the balance in your area and in the region? Does it support mobility for various segments of the population?

Cars

The private automobile is the predominant form of transportation in the region. It allows travelers to travel anywhere any time on the individual’s own schedule. Trips can be direct and timely especially during off peak hours.

According to AAA’s 2013 ‘Your Driving Costs’ study, increases in maintenance, insurance and fuel resulted in a \$9,122 yearly cost to own and operate a sedan, just over 60 cents a mile. This was based on driving 15,000 miles annually. In 2010 it was 56.6 cents per mile. Parking can be an added expense.

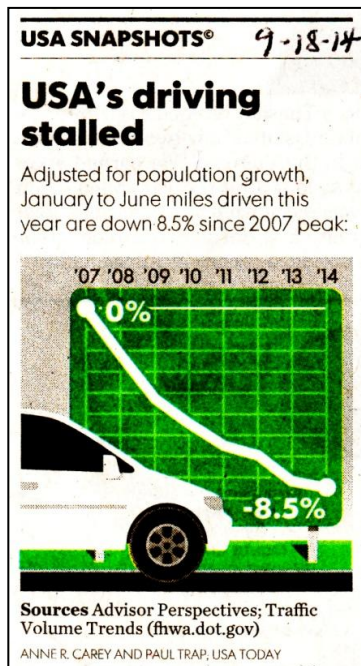
Three Interstate routes pass through the region as well as several state routes and local roadways. Maintaining safe and efficient traffic flow are priorities for governments and planners as well as drivers. Congestion reduction and accident prevention are two of the objectives of several local roadway construction projects funded with federal dollars, state and local funds. The completed work seeks to contribute to economic development and quality of life. Major projects include:



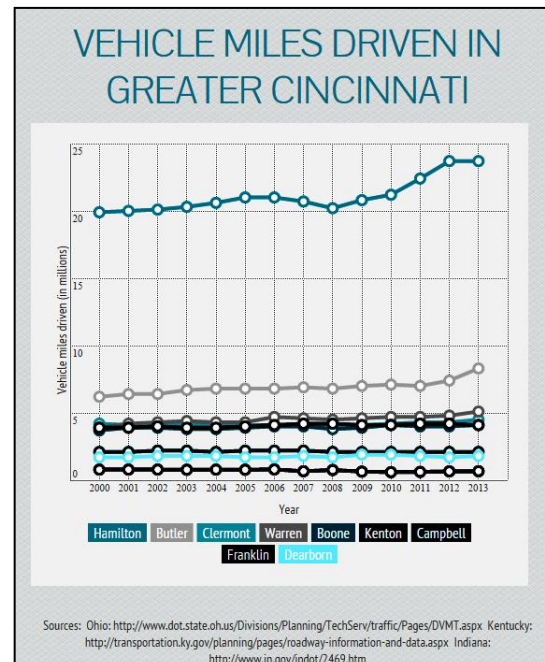
1. The I-75 Mill Creek Expressway and Thru-the-Valley projects extend from the Western Hills viaduct to I-275. The projects are adding a north and south lane and reconfiguring interchanges while also reconfiguring some local roads, e.g., Hopple Street. www.i75millcreekepressway.com www.thruthevalley.com
2. The Martin Luther King exchange to provide access to Uptown from I-71. Construction has begun on this more than \$80 million interchange project expected to be complete in September 2017. www.uptownaccessstudy.com
3. Eastern Corridor Project: a decades-long project including: State Route 32 and Eastgate area improvements that are under construction; an Interstate interchange reconstruction that is completed; a proposed Red Bank Expressway realignment; a contentious recommendation for the relocation of State Route 32; and other transit improvements. <http://easterncorridor.org>
4. Plans for the Brent Spence Bridge and the Western Hills Viaduct replacements continue to be discussed, with funding being a challenge.

In addition to private car travel, other options are available in the area: Zipcar, taxi cabs, quasi taxis and ride share programs. Zipcar is a car rental company that provides automobile reservations to members by the hour or day. Zipcar members pay a monthly or annual membership fee in addition to local rental charges. Zipcars are available in Cincinnati and at UC. Uber and Lyft are services that rival taxis and provide service in Cincinnati to customers who use a smartphone app to call for service, view rates and pay for service. Drivers for these transportation companies use their personal vehicles to transport riders. Corporate licensing does not apply. With concern for safety and fairness, rules to regulate ‘innovative’ service are being considered by the City.

Automobile use is underpriced but costs appear elsewhere in the economy: in health care, pollution and delays in getting to employment. Parking is not free and is reflected in higher costs for groceries, retail costs at malls, increased costs for residential units and lost revenue because of unproductive use. (Source: What is the true cost of free parking?, Shaun Courtney, <http://urbanful.org/2014/07/07/free-parking/>). Parking construction costs vary depending on location: urban/suburban, on street/off street, above ground or below ground garage: \$1,500 for surface parking in suburban areas to \$20,000 for underground parking in urban areas not including land costs. Maintenance can cost \$100 – \$500 or more per space per year.



The graph at left shows that in the U.S. overall, miles driven has dropped since 2007. The chart at right shows that Greater Cincinnati has seen an opposite trend in recent years.



A 2014 estimate for new construction of a two-lane urban arterial road with sidewalks, curb and gutters cost \$9.5 million per centerline mile. Costs of current I-75 construction are available at the web sites listed above.

According to 2000 census, 23.37 percent of Cincinnati households did not own or have access to a car.

Advantages of private automobile:

- Convenience of travel when desired
- Reduced travel times
- Door to door travel
- Transporting ‘stuff,’ items associated with the travel

Disadvantages of private automobile:

- More costly form of transportation and storage costs
- Contributes to air pollution from burning of fossil fuel
- Traffic congestion is an economic drain
- Roadways can disrupt communities

Public Transit



Transit systems provide affordable mobility for people who do not, or cannot, operate a motor vehicle because of personal preference, low income, disability, youth or older age.

Metro is the bus system for SORTA, the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority. Most of the fixed routes of this transit system are in the City of Cincinnati where the system originated and whose 0.03 percent portion of the city earning tax is the primary funding source. Some routes extend into Hamilton County. Government Square is Metro’s downtown transit hub. An Uptown Transit District has opened as a major connection and transfer point for several Metro routes. Each of the four boarding areas has rider information, ticket vending machines and real-time formation.

In addition to fixed route service, Metro operates express routes with limited or no stops between origin and destination and Metro Plus, a type of bus rapid-transit service with limited stops between the Kenwood area and downtown Cincinnati with service to the University of Cincinnati, Xavier University and uptown health facilities. Metro has barrier-free ‘kneeler’ buses and separate Access service is available for those who qualify because of a disability. There are bike racks on the front of all buses and most have wheelchair lifts or ramps and security camera systems.

Metro can purchase a new bus with about 80 percent federal funding and some local match to replace a bus that is at least 12 years old. A conventional diesel bus costs about \$387,000 and a hybrid costs about \$628,000 saving about 30 percent in fuel use over its 12-year useful life. Hybrids, powered by an electric motor and a diesel engine, use less fuel and emit less exhaust. Recent new hybrids were funded by a combination of federal funding, including Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) and Clean Fuels funding and with a local dollar match.

Metro’s \$1.75 base fare is among the lowest in the country. The fare in Hamilton County outside the city is \$2.65 and \$3 for Harrison and more for Clermont, Butler and Warren County destinations. A full bus carries about 44 passengers using energy more efficiently with less air pollution than a private vehicle. More information is available at www.go-metro.com.

TANK, the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky, provides transit service for Boone, Campbell and Kenton Counties and connects to downtown Cincinnati. TANK operates 27 routes through 19 park and ride locations and the Southbank Shuttle Trolley, which travels through Newport, Covington and downtown Cincinnati. Learn more at www.tankbus.org.

CTC, the Clermont County Connection, provides an Eastgate – Felicity Shuttle, two express routes to downtown Cincinnati and Dial-A-Ride service. More information is at www.clermontcountyohio.gov.

BCRTA, the Butler County Regional Transit Authority, provides shuttle and connector routes for Hamilton, Middletown and Oxford and Dial-A-Ride service for individual transportation to riders that make advanced reservations. More about them is found at www.butlertransitauthority.com.

Bus service brings more than 20 percent of workers to downtown Cincinnati daily.

Cincinnati Streetcar



The Cincinnati Streetcar is currently under construction. Tracks have been laid from Elm Street and 12th Street up to Henry Street and down Race to 12th Street. As of late September, tracks are pushing south through the Central Business District along Walnut Street. The maintenance and operation facility is under construction on Henry Street near Findlay Market. The vehicles are being assembled in Elmira, New York and will hold 150 people. The sources of funds to operate the system are being discussed and the results of those discussions will help determine the fare.

The Cincinnati Streetcar is owned by the City of Cincinnati and will be operated by Metro. Service is scheduled to begin in September 2016. This electric mode of transportation will complement Metro service and

seeks to spur housing and commercial development in the area. A streetcar provides quiet and smooth running travel. It is planned to be part of a multimodal system connecting downtown Cincinnati with surrounding areas. Construction funding for Phase One of the \$147.8 million Cincinnati Streetcar comes from \$44.9 million in Federal grants and \$87.9 million in City funds. More information is at www.cincinnati-oh.gov/streetcar.

Advantages of transit transportation:

- Provides cost-effective access to employment
- Uses energy efficiently
- Provides the traveler with time to engage in activities, e.g., reading, using electronic devices, visiting etc.
- All transit trips start with walking which provides exercise for a healthier population
- Connects with other modes of transportation

Disadvantages of transit transportation:

- Takes more travel time to get to a destination than private vehicle
- Service is not sufficiently frequent
- Hours of operation are limited
- Space is shared with other passengers and can be crowded
- Some people need to learn how to use the system

Bicycles



In more recent years, bike use has been considered a form of recreation. Increasingly, bikes are being used for transportation for work, play and daily activities. Americans are driving less, but biking, walking and using transit more, except in Hamilton County. (See charts under "Cars" heading.)

The OKI Regional Bicycle Plan, a component of the region's multi-modal Regional Transportation Plan, has a summary of on-road and trail bicycle facilities with a view

toward travel by bicycle becoming an integral mode of travel. Communities are developing bike plans. Facilities are being installed to support biking: bike lanes, bike racks and secure storage areas for bikes. Sharrows, shared lane markings, and bike lanes provide ways for travel to work. In Ohio, bikes are considered vehicles and subject to the same rules and privileges as cars. Bike trails generally are off-road, not near employment centers and used more for recreation.

Costs to use a bicycle are related to the bike and the equipment used by the rider. The facilities to support biking can be costly to construct and maintain. Cost estimates to build the 6.5 mile Wasson Way Trail are \$7.5 to \$11.2 million, depending on the features added to it. More information is at <http://wassonway.org/>. Average maintenance for an off-street asphalt trail ranges between \$3,500 and \$6,000 per year, per mile, depending on the presence of facilities. A strong volunteer program is considered a best practice to help maintain trails.

Costs to build on-street components of a bike plan may be \$1.5 million annually but reduced by coordinating with routine street rehabilitation projects and use of grant funding. The primary street maintenance concern for bicyclists is a clean surface. Cincinnati's Public Services Department reports that the current cost for street sweeping is \$30 per mile. Biking to work can reduce transportation and parking costs, health care costs and absenteeism while increasing productivity. Availability of changing facilities is helpful.

Expansion of bike trails in Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky depends largely on the commitment of local communities to finding ways to build them. Some examples follow.

The City of Cincinnati Bicycle Transportation Plan seeks to make bicycling a part of daily life in the City for use by people of all ages and abilities for trips of all sorts. The plan recommends 445 miles of on-street and off-street facilities. More information can be found at www.cincinnati-oh.gov/bikes. Red Bike is a bike-sharing program available in downtown and uptown Cincinnati allowing rides for up to 60 minutes from one point to another of 30 stations for an \$8 daily charge or purchase of an annual pass. Learn more at www.cincyredbike.org.

The Anderson Trails Plan identifies walkways, bike ways and trails to provide safe access for pedestrians or bicyclists to places such as schools, post office, parks, retail centers, libraries, recreational facilities, health centers and transit. The township has constructed over 23 miles of Anderson Trails. Sidewalks are being planned for Beechmont Avenue. More information is at www.andersontownship.org.

The Little Miami Scenic Trail runs through five southwestern counties in Ohio and will connect with other bike trails on the Ohio River. The positive impact a bike trail can make on a community can be seen in Loveland.

Other trail plans include: www.trailink.com/trail/mill-creek-greenway and www.OhioRiverTrailWest.com

Regional Trails Alliance is a collaborative effort of many trail groups joining forces to build a connected and consistent regional trails network. Currently the Alliance is creating a GIS-based Regional Trails Master Plan that reflects the vision of local elected officials, planners, user groups and interested citizens in the nine county region around Cincinnati and will help guide the development of hike and bike trails for this region over the next 20 years. For information about the Regional Trails Alliance visit, <http://www.meetmeoutdoors.com/home>.

Queen City Bike is a member based advocacy organization working to make streets safer for cycling and bringing the cycling community together. More information about this organization is at www.queencitybike.com.

OKI has a Regional Bicycle Plan as part of the region's multi-modal Regional Transportation Plan. It is a summary of existing on-road and trail bicycle facilities and recommendations for improving cycling conditions in the region. A Status Report on Trails and Greenways in the OKI Region January 2011 is available at www.oki.org/pdf/trailplans.pdf.

Advantages of bikes as a form of transportation:

- Source of exercise and addresses issues of obesity
- Inexpensive mode of transportation

- Environmentally friendly form of transportation
- Has traffic calming effects

Disadvantages:

- Safety concerns
- Difficult to use in inclement weather
- Secure storage facilities needed for extended stops
- Changing &/or shower facilities needed for work related trips

WALKING



Walking is a way to get exercise and stay healthy. Walking provides fitness and transportation. Beyond clothing and shoes walking costs for an individual are minimal. There are costs to accommodate pedestrians. Facilities in urban and suburban areas can support and promote walking. Some communities have adopted Complete Streets policies for safe access for all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Streets are designed to make it easy to cross the street, walk, bike and allow buses to run on time. Several communities in the region are using a Complete Streets model in planning activities. The 2012 Plan Cincinnati highlights the importance of

Complete Streets and walkable neighborhoods, as detailed at www.plancincinnati.org.

Walkable communities are pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive in neighborhood design. Residential and commercial density, land use mix and street connectivity affect walkability. The presence or absence and quality of sidewalks, or other pedestrian rights-of-way, traffic and road conditions, land use patterns, building accessibility and safety, among others, are some of the factors influencing walkability.

On a scale of 100 (walker's paradise) to 0 (car-dependent), Cincinnati has an average Walk Score of 50, meaning somewhat walkable. Some errands can be accomplished on foot. Walk Score promotes walkable neighborhoods in support of health, the environment and the economy. Learn more at www.walkscore.com.

A survey of the nation's top 30 metro areas, *Foot Traffic Ahead: Ranking Walkable Urbanism in America's Largest Metros*, describes how important Walkable Urban Places (WalkUPs) are as economic engines, as talent attractors and as highly-productive real estate. These WalkUPs are found to be a crucial component in building and sustaining a thriving urban economy. The Cincinnati area was ranked twentieth, with seven total WalkUPs in the region, as compared with other regions according to this study. Read the study at www.smartgrowthamerica.org/locus/foot-traffic-ahead.

Pedestrian travel is a component of OKI's regional transportation plan. Sidewalks as part of the local street system accommodate pedestrians and require crosswalk facilities for safety. There are federal funds available on a competitive basis for some sidewalk construction. Click on Funding Opportunities at www.oki.org. In Cincinnati, it costs more than \$130,000 to construct one mile of walk and driveway on each side of a street. Constructing and maintaining sidewalk space is shared by property owners and the City of Cincinnati. Who is responsible and pays for the construction and maintenance of sidewalks where you live?

Advantages of walking:

- Least costly form of transportation
- Provides exercise and health benefits
- Saves fuel

Disadvantages

- Can be boring
- Prolongs travel times
- Requires infrastructure for safety in developed areas
- Physically demanding
- Difficulty for people with disabilities

Cars and support for driving are favored in this region. The vast majority of public funds for transportation are allocated for motor vehicle use. Any readjustment or reallocation to other modes of transportation would take a major shift in attitudes for elected and administrative leaders to discuss or propose any changes.

Maintaining existing spread-out infrastructure is costly. A more balanced mode split can reduce personal transportation costs, promote healthy life styles, attract young professionals and aid in reducing air pollution among other advantages.