



PROJECT SUMMARY

City of Sulphur



**BAYOU
BIKESHARE
PLAN**

Feasibility Study and Implementation

Bantam Strategy Group and Toole Design Group

APRIL 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the idea of bikeshare expands in Louisiana and other parts of the country, the leadership of Southwest Louisiana started exploring this alternative transportation becoming a reality in the community. In partnership with the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana, Calcasieu Parish, the City of Sulphur, the City of Lake Charles, the Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Juliet *Hardtner* Endowment *Fund*, and several other local stakeholders began evaluating a bikeshare system for the Sulphur and Lake Charles areas. The Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana engaged Bantam Strategy Group and Toole Design Group, two experienced planning firms, to facilitate this Bikeshare Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan, named the *Bayou Bikeshare Plan*.

This plan was directed by a steering committee involving representation from the City of Lake Charles (Lake Charles), City of Sulphur (Sulphur) McNeese State University, Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau, Calcasieu Parish, Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana, Southwest Louisiana Area Health Education Centre (SWLAHEC), Hardtner family, Imperial Calcasieu Regional Planning and Development Commission (IMCAL), Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance, Phillips 66, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana. The steering committee met six times over the course of the study thus becoming the local supervisory body ensuring the voice of the community was reflected and ensuring the project will progress as planned to completion. The participation of the taskforce members is not a reflection of individual endorsements of this project.

This study evaluates the readiness of implementing a bikeshare program in the two cities and university identified in this study, and the probability of success the system could have with usage and financial sustainability. Several sections of this study explore bikeshare equipment and technology, business models, funding options, and final bikeshare recommendations. A series of public and individual meetings were conducted to understand the local impact, opportunities, and challenges the bikeshare system would have in Southwest Louisiana.

Using a data driven approach and best practices from other jurisdictions, the team developed a proposed system service area and phasing plan for the bikeshare program. This process began with a high-level community analysis to explore the physical conditions, population and demographic trends, land use and economic development trends, and the transportation environment to identify potential opportunities and challenges for the bikeshare program.

One of the most substantial goals for this bikeshare program was to determine a suitable funding structure; therefore, a high-level evaluation of different business models was conducted to discover what could be achievable for both communities and the university. This plan summarizes the different ownership structures, operating models, funding mechanisms, and more recommendations. Additionally, the team considered the community and political will associated with implementing a bikeshare system.

The recommendation for the City of Sulphur is to consider a bicycle library and focus on a community bicycle and pedestrian plan initially. The City of Lake Charles and McNeese State University are feasible locations for a bikeshare system. This document fully outlines the results from the analysis, outreach, and full scope of work conducted from mid-July 2018 to end of February 2019 for Bayou Bikeshare.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

This section was designed so all recommendations for the bikeshare program can be reviewed with ease and at a glance. A complete explanation, analysis, and the methodologies used to draw on these recommendations can be found in the full *Bayou Bikeshare Feasibility and Implementation Plan* document.

SULPHUR BIKE LIBRARY

Based on Sulphur's smaller community size and low-to-moderate demand for bikeshare, a bike library is proposed for the City of Sulphur. A bike library would consist of a fleet of bicycles that could be checked out from one or more attended locations for no or minimal cost. Similar to library books, the bikes could be checked out for a few hours or a few months before being returned. Bike libraries can be an extension of the public library system or independently operated by city-contracted staff, volunteers, or bicycling advocacy groups.

Bike lending libraries are staffed locations where regular bicycles are available. As most systems operate independently, there is a larger variety of types and business models. Some function more like a short-term bike share system and others are more like a personal bike rental option available for a few days, months, or more. Check-outs and returns are conducted in person. This requires staff which may limit the number of locations and the hours of operation. Most bike libraries have one or two locations for bike checkout, and it is rare for bike libraries to have more than four or five locations. Bike libraries generally have a greater variety of bike types available in the fleet.

This type of program is not set up for short, spontaneous, point-to-point trips; but would provide anyone in the community a way to get a bicycle that they could use for transportation or recreation. For example, a visitor could check out a bike for a few hours. A resident or student could check out a bike and keep it for a month or a semester as a means of getting around.

Bike libraries work well in smaller communities with insufficient bikeshare demand to support a typical bike share system, but in which there is still a strong constituency for and interest in bike sharing within the community. They typically require one or more champions that will take on raising funds, identifying resources, and pushing the planning and development process for the bike library forward.

BIKE LIBRARY SYSTEM PLAN

For Sulphur, the best option would be for interested regional partners to create a system with a central hub somewhere such as in the six SPAR (Sulphur Parks and Recreation) parks throughout Sulphur, and smaller hubs located at locations such as Wise Penny, a thrift store with social services located in North Sulphur. Both proposed locations are in lower-income and more diverse parts of Sulphur based on the equity analysis; areas which may have higher need for free or low-cost access to bikes. Multiple locations could be opened simultaneously, or the central location could be developed first, with satellite locations to follow.

The size of each hub depends on available space and funding. The central hub should start with at least 10 to 20 bikes and a variety of bike types including kids bikes and adaptive bicycles. The smaller hubs could be 5 to 10 bikes. As demand grows, additional bikes may be needed to supplement the fleet.

The most critical need for a bike library is to identify who would oversee the program. It is recommended that the City determine whether SPAR can take on the additional responsibility of overseeing the program and checking out bicycles. If SPAR does not have capacity, an alternative lead will need to be identified, such as the Sulphur Public Library or a volunteer organization.