



THE FRIENDLY DRIVER PROGRAM: Creating a Program to Encourage Active Transportation

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Abstract

The City of Little Rock Friendly Driver Certification Program (Program) seeks to teach vehicular drivers to better navigate bicycles, pedestrians, and their associated infrastructure. Since its launch in 2018, it has been well received by over 350 participants and been highly effective at reaching and teaching the most impactful people.

Introduction

The largest barrier to increasing active transportation in Arkansas is the fear of being struck by a motor vehicle.¹ Bicycle safety courses are common, but because drivers are at fault in about half of motor vehicle vs. bike collisions, this approach alone is limited.² The Program is a two-hour certification course targeting drivers who rarely bike or walk on or along city streets.

Purpose/Objectives

The Program has the following objectives:

Increase Safety: Little Rock is the 19th most dangerous place to walk in the United States.³ Cyclist safety is also poor.⁴ The Program seeks to increase driver knowledge and empathy in order to decrease crash rates and severities.

Encourage Walking and Biking: Fear of being struck by a motor vehicle is the strongest disincentive to biking and walking in Arkansas.¹ By addressing safety, the Program encourages active transportation and recreation.

Increase Public Health: Arkansas is the 3rd most physically inactive state in the country, contributing to a host of health problems.⁵ This Program encourages active transportation.

Increase Livability: Livability depends on safe transportation options. The Program makes active transportation safer in Little Rock.

Increase Transportation Equity: Many residents are unable to drive due to age, health, or income. The Program helps to increase transportation equity and independence.

*“Thought I knew a lot about Bike/Driver safety—I learned a lot!”
– Program Participant*

Methods

The Program is inspired by the Bicycle Friendly Driver course in Fort Collins, CO,⁶ but expanded in scope to consider pedestrian safety and reflects Arkansas and Little Rock laws and ordinances.

In 2018, six Program Instructors trained to teach and assisted in the creation of the Program. We identified key metrics to evaluate program success, including classes taught, participants certified, knowledge gained, and affect. We marketed the program through social media, print advertising, word of mouth, and reaching out to community organizations and businesses.

In the two-hour Program, participants first take a pretest to assess prior knowledge. The class and teacher then participate in a one-hour guided discussion after which participants take a posttest to determine knowledge gained. Tests are scored in class for certification. Participants also complete a demographic survey and course evaluation. Pretest and posttest scores, surveys, and evaluations allow the program to collect and analyze data relating to the key metrics.

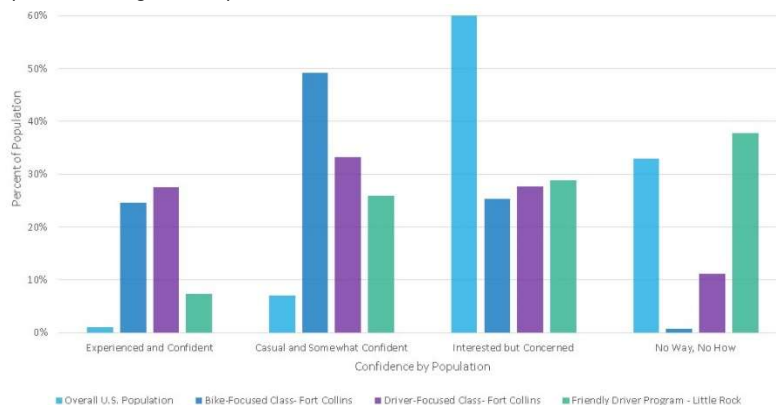


Figure 1. Participant bicycle confidence level of participants in three different safety education outreach efforts, Fort Collins bike safety, Fort Collins Bike-Friendly Driver⁶, and CLR’s Friendly Driver Program. To date, the CLR Friendly Driver Program’s reach (green) more closely matches the overall U.S. population (light blue), suggesting we are effectively marketing to and getting participation from drivers who would not be engaged by bike- or pedestrian-specific educational outreach efforts.

“I would recommend everyone gets a chance to take a course such as this one.” – Program Participant

Results

Classes Taught: 35 classes for individuals and 7 classes for organizations taught to date.

Participants: Over 350 participants have taken the course to date.

Type of Participants Taught: This class is effective at reaching road users unfamiliar with driving a bike on city streets (Fig. 1).

Knowledge Gained: 155% increase in posttest vs. pretest score.

Participant Satisfaction:

- Information understandable and useful? **4.4/5.0**
- Instructor knowledgeable and helpful? **4.5/5.0**
- Recommend course to friend? **92% Yes**

Encourage Walking/Biking: 58% of respondents (mostly people who do not currently ride on the street, Fig. 1) said they would feel more comfortable walking or biking on city streets after taking the Program.

Cyclist Does Not Stop at Stop Sign

Bike driver approaches a stop sign, scans for conflicts, and sees none. Bike driver proceeds through the intersection without coming to a complete stop.



Figure 2. The Program allows us to share important messaging about AR Act 650, passed in April 2019.

Discussion

Evidence demonstrates the Program has been embraced by participants and has been effective at teaching in the cognitive and affective learning domains. We will continue to keep the program current (Fig. 2), continue to offer it in our community, and seek additional funding to promote the Program. We are also working with ArDOT to consider how to franchise the Program to communities across Arkansas. Given the Program’s successes to date and future plans, we believe the Program has been and will continue to be an important component of addressing the stated Objectives.

References

1. AR Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, 2017, Appendix A
2. <https://www.littlerock.gov/for-residents/bikeped-little-rock/education/>
3. Dangerous by Design 2019, Smart Growth America
4. League of American Bicyclists Little Rock Report Card 2016
5. www.stateofobesity.org
6. <https://www.fcgov.com/bicycling/bike-friendly-driver-program.php>

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