CHAPTER 3:
EXISTING CONDITIONS

HOW DOES LAKEWOOD MOVE?

Like most Americans living in suburban communities, the majority of Lakewood residents typically get where they need to go by driving a car. Excluding the 20% of Lakewood residents who work from home (WFH), 93% of daily commutes take place in a motor vehicle, either alone or as part of a carpool (Figure 11). While commuting trips are not necessarily a reflection of all travel habits and commuting is not the sole focus of this Plan, commute data is the most reliable and consistent data available and demonstrates the car-dependency that is currently prevalent throughout the region. Regardless, nearly eight hundred Lakewood residents ride a bicycle to work daily, which is a higher percentage of the working population than many neighboring municipalities and much higher than the national average (Table 2). Furthermore, rates

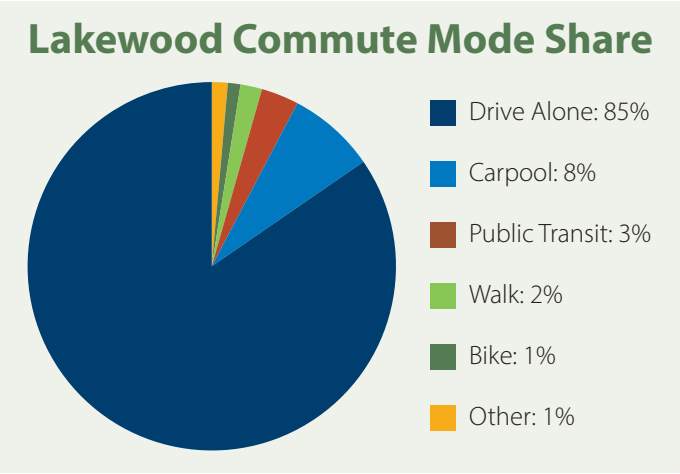


Figure 11: Lakewood mode share for non-WFH commutes. Source: US Census 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

Place	Bicycle Mode Share
Lakewood	1.12%
Denver	1.61%
Golden	2.28%
Edgewater	0.75%
Wheat Ridge	0.68%
Jefferson County	0.76%
Colorado	1.16%
USA	0.45%

Table 2: Comparison of bicycle mode share across national, state, and neighboring local places as a % of non-WFH commutes. Source: US Census 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

of commuting by bicycle in Lakewood have been increasing over the past several years (Figure 12). This reflects regional trends and could be a result of many factors, including a growing prevalence of e-bikes, an increase in safe bicycle facilities being constructed, and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic increasing interest in active transportation. Though infrastructure is not the sole driver of car-dependency—combining trips, transporting family members, and needing a vehicle for work are all common reasons people might need to commute in a motor vehicle—it is important to take a look at the existing bike facilities in Lakewood to identify common themes and potential improvements that could make bicycling a realistic alternative to driving for more people.

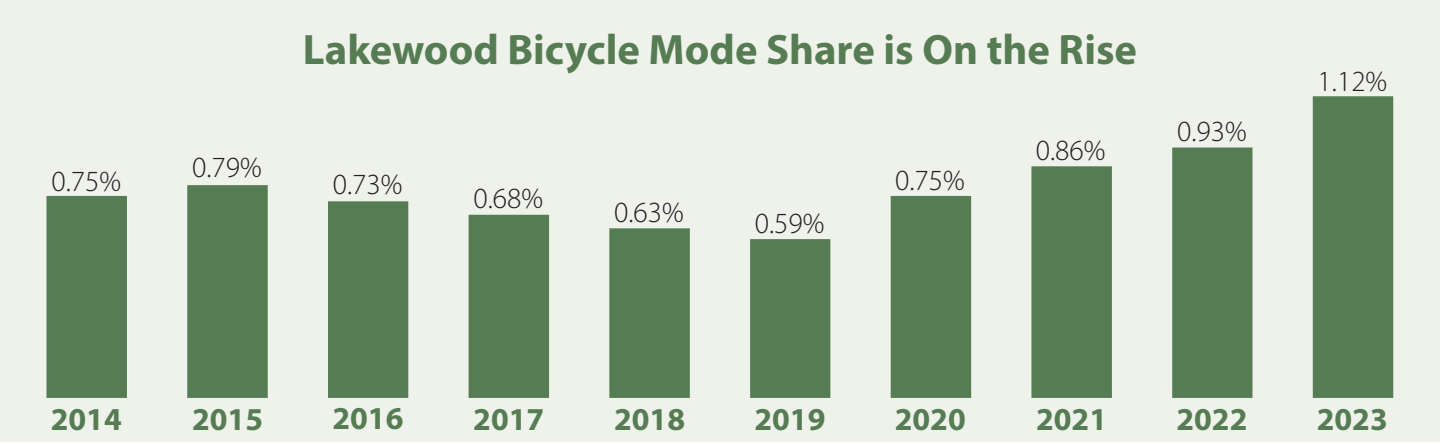


Figure 12: Lakewood bicycle mode share from 2014-2023 as a % of non-WFH commuting trips. Source: US Census ACS 5-year Estimates, 2014-2023.

EXISTING BICYCLE NETWORK

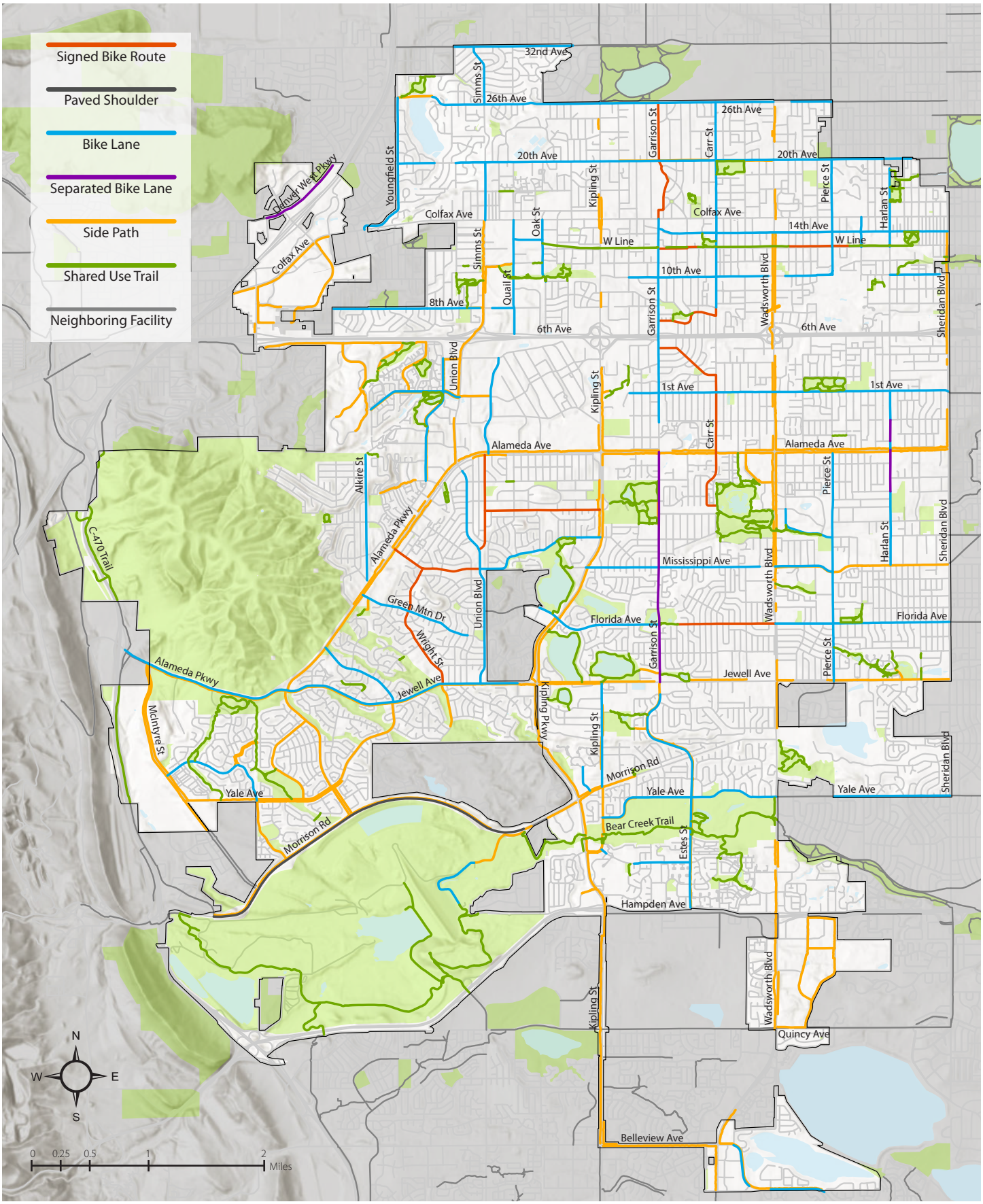


Figure 13: Map of Lakewood's existing bicycle facility network.

Existing Network Overview

Lakewood's bicycle network consists of:

- **109 lane miles of bike lanes,**
- **4 lane miles of buffered bike lanes,**
- **6 lane miles of separated bike lanes,**
- **74 miles of multimodal side paths,**
- **50 miles of off-street shared use trails, and**
- **10 miles of other signed bike routes.**

The network also includes segments of four Jeffco Regional Bikeways that pass through Lakewood along 32nd Ave, the W Line light rail corridor and 8th Ave, Garrison St and Estes St, and the Bear Creek Trail.

Recent Successes

While it's important to identify challenges in the existing network in order to lay the groundwork for identifying improvements, it's also important to highlight some examples of what is going well. Lakewood recently installed its very first separated bike lanes in 2024 on sections of Garrison St, Harlan St, and Denver West Pkwy, increasing the comfort of the existing bike lanes for a greater range of bicyclists while also managing illegal parking. The fan-favorite Bear Creek Trail also underwent major improvements in 2023 to widen and smooth the path for more comfortable shared use between trail users of all modes. In 2022, all "Share the Road" signs in the City were replaced with signs that more clearly educate motorists on their responsibility to keep bicyclists safe on Lakewood roads per Colorado state law (C.R.S. 42-4-1003). These are just a few examples mentioned by the public in the Spring 2024 Bike Plan survey of what already makes Lakewood a great place to ride a bike.

Refining Terminology

In order to provide bicycle network maps and signage that make finding a suitable bike route as straightforward as possible, as well as to assist future planning and development efforts, this Plan has refined the facility terminology set forth in the 2005 and 2018 Plans for consistency and clarity.

Shared Use Paths have been split into three categories: paths narrower than 8 feet are no longer considered designated bike facilities (though it is legal in Lakewood to ride a bicycle on any sidewalk), paths adjacent to roadways are now labeled as Side Paths, and paths not adjacent to a roadway are named Shared Use Trails.

Shared Roadways identified in previous Plans were not consistently labeled, signed, or marked as such, so Figure 13 labels any of these routes with existing signage as Signed Bike Routes. The concept of Shared Roadways will henceforth be replaced with Neighborhood Bikeways, which builds upon a similar vision with more consistently established parameters described in Appendix E.

Challenges & Room For Improvement

When asked in the Spring 2024 online Bike Plan survey (see Appendix B) what top three improvements would make bicycling more accessible to everyone in Lakewood, the community identified three clear front runners:

1. **Continuous, connected bike routes with no gaps (75% of respondents),**
2. **Improved crossing/intersection treatments (54% of respondents), and**
3. **Safer or more comfortable bike facilities (53% of respondents).**

These opportunities for improvement identified by the community can provide guidance on how to prioritize future projects, as well as provide a lens through which to examine how residents are experiencing the current bicycle network. While the three improvements are all interconnected, each has its own effect on the overall system and its own Lakewood-specific examples.

1. Continuity & Connectivity

A gap in a bike facility can affect the overall comfort and safety of the entire route. When a bike lane ends abruptly, bicyclists are forced to merge into a travel lane—often directly in front of approaching vehicles. This sudden moment of uncertainty and risk can cause some bicyclists to avoid the facility entirely, robbing it of its potential to provide a safe alternative to driving for bicyclists of all confidence levels. This is what many Lakewood bicyclists currently experience in places like 8th Ave at Simms St, 26th Ave at Wadsworth Blvd, and Garrison St at Alameda Ave (Figure 14). In addition to lowering the accessibility of the route, gaps in a facility can cause confusion and require bicyclists to research a route beforehand, reducing the convenience and ease of bicycling for transportation. These kinds of gaps in the existing bicycle network are a common enough theme that filling them was identified as a specific strategy in Envision Lakewood 2040, the City's Comprehensive Plan. The most effective bicycle networks focus not only on building and upgrading facilities, but also on making sure any gaps are filled and there are seamless connections between facilities.

Figure 14: A gap in the bike lane on Garrison St north of Alameda Ave, scheduled for reconstruction in 2026.

2. Crossings

Similar to a gap in the facility itself, a difficult or unsafe intersection or crossing has the potential to make a route inaccessible to many bicyclists. Crossing challenges take many forms in Lakewood, whether it's a lack of designated space for bicyclists to wait at an intersection, a traffic signal without bike detection, an uncontrolled crossing where a local route meets a high-volume road, or a completely inaccessible barrier such as a freeway with crossings only spaced out every 1-2 miles. The 6th Ave Freeway in particular has posed a challenge to bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and access since its construction in the 1950's, cutting active transportation users off from destinations across the freeway and forcing them to cross free-flowing lanes of fast-moving traffic at freeway on and off ramps. Bicycling for transportation is easier and more convenient when it is not necessary to travel out of the way to cross a barrier safely. When safe crossings cannot be added, existing crossings can be retrofitted with active modes in mind.

"[6th Ave] is like a dividing wall between North Lakewood and the rest of Lakewood."
- Online Mapping Tool Comment

3. Comfort

A comfortable bicycle facility is a facility in which a bicyclist feels safe and at ease. Since this is a subjective measure, the best way to provide a bicycle network that is comfortable for the greatest number of existing and potential bicyclists is to design for the "Interested but Concerned" bicyclist (see page 7) that prefers designated space and greater separation from motor vehicles. Existing bike facilities such as the bike lanes on Garrison St north of Alameda Ave or on Florida Ave east of Wadsworth Blvd are popular routes for experienced riders, but would be more accessible to a broader range of bicyclists if greater separation were provided. Neighborhood streets with low vehicle speeds and volumes are also comfortable for "Interested but Concerned" bicyclists since the occurrence of sharing the road with traffic is low and motorists on these streets tend to pass with more care than on high-speed roads. With a dense network of such neighborhood streets and a framework of existing bike lanes that could be separated in the future, there is a lot of potential to transform Lakewood's existing bicycle network from a usable system for confident cyclists to a comfortable and convenient way for bicyclists of all ages and abilities to reach their destinations.

SAFETY & CRASH HISTORY

In addition to taking a proactive approach to providing a safe bike network, City staff is able to identify correctable crash patterns in the existing network by analyzing past bicycle crashes. Bicycle crashes have been declining in Lakewood since an all-time high in 2018 (Figure 15), and the relatively small number of remaining crashes allows a deep dive into the crash reports to determine what types of crashes might be prevented in the future by a change in engineering design.

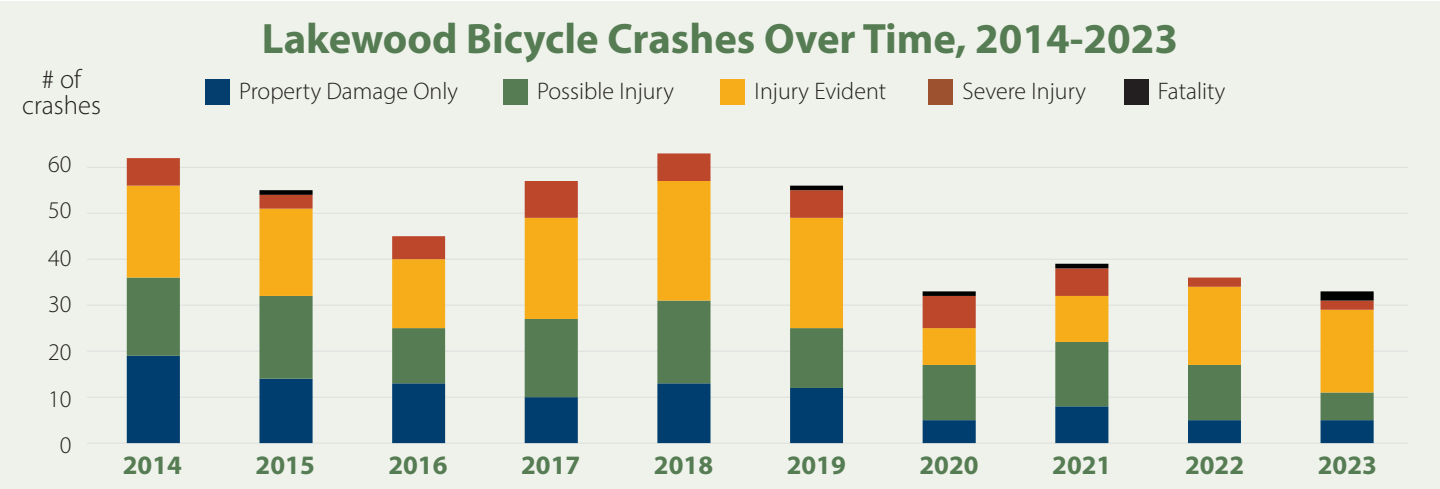


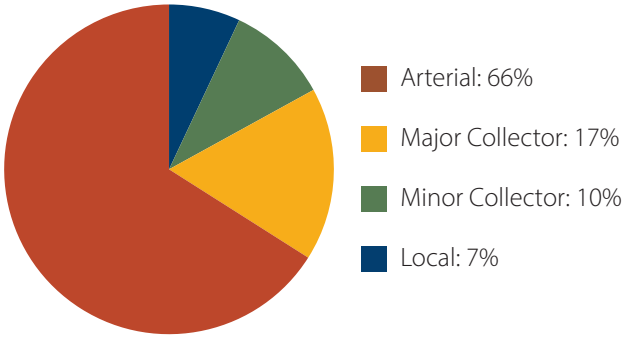
Figure 15: Lakewood bicycle crashes over time from 2014-2023, categorized by level of severity.

Infrastructure vs. Behavior

At a first glance, general crash trends can provide valuable information for engineering decisions. For example, the majority of bicycle crashes taking place on high-speed and high-volume arterial roads may indicate that safety improvements focused on those roads rather than local streets would have the largest impact. Likewise, knowing that 72% of bicycle crashes happen at intersections suggests that investing in intersection and crossing improvements would be beneficial (Figure 16). But infrastructure alone cannot prevent all crashes; looking beyond surface-level trends is extremely important in crash analysis to determine any behavioral factors unrelated to the existing infrastructure that may require a collaborative solution beyond engineering design.

For more information about Lakewood bicycle crash patterns from 2014-2023, see Appendix C.

Bicycle Crashes by Roadway Type



Bicycle Crashes by Location

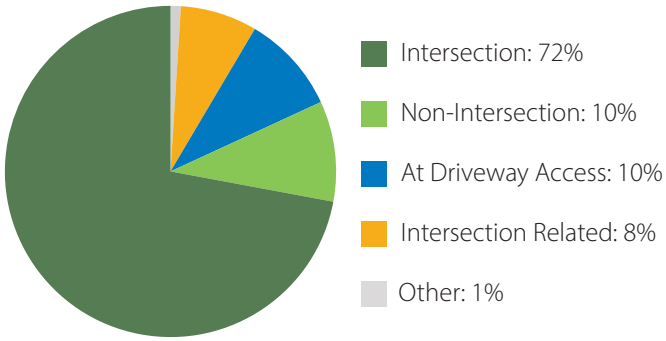


Figure 16: Lakewood bicycle crashes 2014-2023 by roadway type (top) and roadway location (bottom).

BEYOND INFRASTRUCTURE: EXISTING POLICIES & PROGRAMS

While this is an infrastructure-focused Plan, it is important to recognize that infrastructure alone does not make a bikeable community. Several policies and programs that impact bikeability in Lakewood are highlighted below.

Neighborhood Speed Limit

In 2024, City Council adopted a resolution to lower the citywide speed limit on local roads from 30mph to 20mph. Now consistent with the neighborhood speed limits in Golden and Denver, the lower speeds are intended to make Lakewood's streets safer for children, pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers alike.

Parking & Speed Enforcement

City Council amended the City's Municipal Code in 2024 to expand parking enforcement with additional parking enforcement officials to increase citations for illegal parking behaviors in the public right of way, including parking in bike lanes. In addition to increased parking enforcement, City Council also recently authorized the use of automated speed and red-light enforcement at several major intersections with high fatality rates, as well as in select locations with documented patterns of unsafe behavior. It is expected that the increased enforcement will discourage unsafe driving behaviors and improve overall safety for all road users.

Shared Micromobility

While several neighboring municipalities have embraced dockless e-bike and e-scooter share since its widespread emergence in 2018, Lakewood Municipal Code currently has restrictions in place that have prevented private micromobility share companies from operating in a similar way in Lakewood. While the current City Council has shown interest in amending the Code, there is no public bike share at the time of writing.

Bicycle Friendly Community

For a holistic approach to measuring community bikeability, the League of American Bicyclists uses the following five categories to award communities with a Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) status ranging from Bronze to Diamond:

- **Engineering**: Creating safe and convenient places to ride and park.
- **Education**: Giving people of all ages and abilities the skills and confidence to ride.
- **Encouragement**: Creating a strong bike culture that welcomes and celebrates bicycling.
- **Evaluation & Planning**: Planning for bicycling as a safe and viable transportation option.
- **Equity & Accessibility**: Improving and increasing access and mobility options for everyone.

Following a pause in the program and changes to scoring criteria in 2020, Lakewood was most recently awarded a Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community status in 2023 for the third time. Using the recommendations provided in the Report Card issued upon renewal and this Plan as a guide, City transportation staff plans on applying for an upgrade to Silver BFC status in 2027.