

Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) Bicycle Helmet and Safety Project

2022 - 2024 Summary Report

Thanks to funding by the King County Council between mid-2022 and December 2024, the Violence & Injury Prevention (VIP) Unit worked within a racial and social justice framework to improve bicycle access and bicycle safety in King County. VIP successfully completed the following education and outreach efforts:

- ***Distributed over 6,000 free bicycle helmets to King County residents through community-based organizations, prioritizing low-income, unhoused residents, and communities of color***

The VIP team prioritized communities in South King County, where health disparities and resource gaps are most prominent. When helmets were given to community organizations, VIP staff trained workers how to properly fit helmets on their clients. Recipients included YMCA branches, Boys & Girls Clubs, other non-profits, three Fire Authorities, and community outreach workers.



- ***Invested \$120,000 into communities through grants and special projects***

- **Grants:** In 2023, VIP awarded three community organizations a total of \$30,000 in a competitive grant application process. In 2024, five grantees were awarded a total of \$50,000.



Within these two years, approximately 600 young people received bicycle skill instruction, 170 youth received new or refurbished bikes, along with locks and helmets, and 190 unhoused and low-income residents received free professional bicycle repairs.

- **Special projects:** VIP also funded several other special projects outside of the grants contract process.
 - VIP paid for two billboards to create awareness among drivers to watch out for bicyclists and respect them as fellow users of the road.



- Cascade Bicycle Club developed a social media campaign in fall 2024 aimed at male drivers ages 25-44 to educate and/or remind them how to share the road safely with people on bikes. This project was informed by findings of an analysis of WA Dept of Transportation data looking at characteristics of drivers involved in motor vehicle crashes with bicyclists in King County for the 5-year period 2019 – 2023. The three videos, posted in sequence as ads on Instagram and Facebook, engaged a whopping 350,000 viewers in a three-week period.

- Seattle Public Schools Safe Routes to School Program designed and funded community events in the fall of 2024 to celebrate new traffic gardens at four Seattle elementary schools.
- Mother Africa, a highly respected non-profit working with African and Middle Eastern refugee and immigrant families in South King County, developed a program to teach 20 youth ages 6 – 12 how to ride bikes and how to do so safely. Kids received free bikes, helmets, and locks as part of the program.
- **Collected data about bicycle helmet use across King County.** A highly experienced consultant group conducted observations at 50 locations in 2022 and replicated their study in 2023.
 - Study teams observed 2,095 riders in 2022 and over 3,000 riders in 2023. Overall helmet use remained consistent at 85% in 2022 and 87% in 2023.
 - For both years, teens were the age group least likely to wear helmets, with 71% observed wearing helmets.
 - Riders of electronic *ride-share* bicycles and *ride-share* scooters had much lower helmet use than riders of personal bikes and scooters. Between 2022 and 2023, there was a significant decrease in helmet use among *ride-share* bicyclists from 45% to 7%.
- **Other activities accomplished by the VIP Team**
 - Participated in numerous community events and festivals to distribute helmets and share other safety information
 - Updated PHSKC bicycle safety webpage and link to places to find free and low-cost helmets
 - Monitored King County bicycle-related injury and fatality data
 - Translated bicycle safety educational materials into 13 different languages for public use
 - Partnered with Bike Works and Seattle Housing Authority to present a bike safety training to 20 residents in the High Point community after a collision between a young resident riding a bike and a motorist.

