

HEALTHY AGING AND CYCLING IN CAMBRIDGE



The Healthy Aging and Cycling program was designed to address barriers to cycling for older adults, which were identified through a survey of older adults in Cambridge. The three barriers identified included: fear of motor vehicle traffic, concerns about physical ability to ride a bicycle, and not owning a bicycle. This program intends to address these barriers by providing spin and strength classes, a refresher on the urban cycling basics, and training on renting Bluebikes, our publicly-owned bike share, for individuals who do not own a bike.

In 2020, the Community Development Department (CDD), in partnership with the Council on Aging, launched a new initiative to provide support to overcome these barriers. The goal of the program is to make bicycling more accessible to older adults – for transportation as well as recreation. While many bicycling programs intended for older adults offer one-off workshops and clinics, the Healthy Aging and Cycling program is intended to provide consistent and sustained support around bicycling, acknowledging that it may take time and consistency to work up to riding a bicycle again.

As a publicly-owned transportation system, Bluebikes may present an attractive and affordable transportation option (an annual membership is only \$99, with income-eligible pricing also available), especially for individuals who do not have convenient bicycle storage. Due to their weight, however, Bluebikes are sometimes not an accessible option for older adults trying to return to bicycling. An added benefit of the exercise and fitness training is that it may help to equip older adults with the strength and balance needed to comfortably manage riding bike share bicycles.

HEALTHY AGING BICYCLE PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

- Virtual Webinar Series about urban cycling basics
- Healthy Aging Cycling Coffee+Tea Hour, a monthly virtual meet-up for older adults
- Power Pedal 8-week indoor spin and strengthening class
- Outdoor on-bike refresher course covering bike fit, basic cycling skills, bicycle maintenance, and rules of the road.
- Group ride series on protected infrastructure on Cambridge streets, such as Western Avenue and Memorial Drive.

VIRTUAL WEBINAR SERIES

CDD launched its Healthy Aging and Cycling in Cambridge program with a virtual webinar series covering bicycling considerations specific to older adults. Over the course of the 5 1-hour weekly webinars, participants learned about: cycling basics for older adults, bicycle fit, modifications for bicycles for ease of use, adaptive bicycles, the City initiatives to improve street design and safety for users of all ages and abilities. The success of the program prompted the organization of Healthy Aging and Cycling Coffee+Tea Hour: a monthly virtual meet up hosted by CDD. The meet up is intended to provide continued support around bicycling for older adults and to serve as a networking forum for older adults interested in bicycling, where participants share experiences, plan rides, and provide tips.

POWER PEDAL

In bicycling, “Power Pedal” is when you position

the pedal to provide the strongest possible first pedal stroke to launch off from a standing position. With the help of a Cambridge in Motion Mini-Grant, this class meets twice per week and works towards improving mobility movements and performance, helping older adults to build the foundational strength, balance, and flexibility needed to return to bicycling. When the class is able to meet in person, it will include a spin workout to improve on-bicycle strength with minimal risk of falling.

WEEKLY GROUP RIDES

The Group Ride Series is hosted most Fridays and begins at St. Peters Field near Danehy Park. We begin with group rides on off-street bicycle facilities and work up to on-street riding, navigating intersections, route planning, and practicing riding to common destinations for errands. Join us!

Through this program, the City of Cambridge aims to foster a community of older adult bicyclists, provide information around bicycling as an older adult, and help older adults gain the physical preparedness and confidence to return to biking as an older adult. We hope this helps to build a comprehensive framework and support system to continue to expand Cambridge’s vibrant bicycling culture for all ages and abilities.

To find out more about this program and other bicycle workshops in Cambridge visit www.cambridgema.gov/bikeworkshops



“I have been very interested in meeting cyclists in my age group. I took the survey when the Senior Center was still open and hoped something would come from that...I always leave the [virtual meet ups] very energized. I have learned so much about routes; I’ve met other riders including one in my neighborhood. I’ve gotten more confidence to ride on the roads. It was a huge breakthrough for me to find out how to get to Minuteman without riding to Arlington on Mass Ave!!” – Carol

“So far the classes have exceeded my expectations. The quality of the instructors is more than I expected. I thought it might be too easy, but the instructors challenge us and provide information about how the muscles we work are used in biking. This is very motivating. I’ve done all the classes so far. I look forward to them. I also went walk/jogging yesterday for the first time in quite a while because I feel more connected to physical exercise now.” – Anonymous student

“Thanks so much to you and The City of Cambridge for offering the get-ready-for-bicycling workouts. I absolutely love Cindy Sullivan and her sessions. She provides excellent exercises and helps us understand how they relate to bicycling. She also encourages us to adapt the moves to our own needs. Likewise, she is responsive to participants’ input...I am selective with workout zooms and instructors, and she is terrific in my book. I feel great after each session and motivated to continue.” – Wendy S.