

On April 13, Bike Walk Knoxville led a bike tour of Fort Sanders, World's Fair Park, Market Square, and Cumberland Avenue. Staff and volunteers were joined by City Council member Tommy Smith, local business owners, and other community advocates. The tour highlighted some of the exciting new active transportation infrastructure that has been installed recently, but also showed the room for improvement to make our roadways safer for users of all types.

At our walking tour last fall, we discussed the problematic nature of having the Cumberland Avenue sidewalk as the designated bike route from Tyson Park into the Fort Sanders neighborhood, and this continues to be a huge challenge. Cyclists and pedestrians sharing a narrow sidewalk increases the risk of conflict, but without a bike lane, there is not another valid option available other than taking the lane. This is only worsened by the several apartment complexes and other buildings whose garages and parking lots let out onto Cumberland Avenue, crossing the sidewalk. Vehicles pulling into and out of these areas, combined with the heavy traffic on the street, creates obvious and excessively dangerous conflict points that need to be addressed.

The tour continued, taking our group to Market Square, where we discussed the need for better connectivity to the diverse communities of Knoxville. There are critical gaps preventing downtown from being accessible by walking and biking that, if addressed, would greatly increase the number of people using active transportation and spending time and money at the heart of our city. One example of this would be creating a two-way protected bike lane on White Avenue. Such a route would allow cyclists to avoid the hill on Clinch Avenue, which presents a challenge for many beginner cyclists, as well as the traffic and distracted driving around Fort Sanders Regional and East Tennessee Children's Hospitals. This improvement does not present an excessive cost, but it does require the political will to make it happen.

Overall, we hope this tour was a fun, informative experience and we are so grateful for everyone who participated. If you have ideas about where our biking and walking tours should visit next, please let us know by contacting our Executive Director, Lindsey Kimble, at lindsey.kimble@bikewalktn.org. Check back with us soon for news about our upcoming events and thank you for helping to make Knoxville a better place to bike, walk, and live!