



Bicycle Roadside Assistance Program

The Hartford Business Improvement District (HBID) is a 60-block special services district located in the commercial core of Hartford, Connecticut. The City of Hartford estimates that there is a combined commuting workforce of well over 70,000 people per day, most of whom arrive in our city center by car.

Seeing a need to both alleviate some of the city's vehicular congestion and carbon footprint, HBID introduced a Bicycle Roadside Assistance Program in May 2017. This free, onsite bicycle roadside assistance program is the first of its kind in the United States. HBID Ambassadors are fully trained and available to fix flat tires, replace tubes, reattach slipped chains, or tighten loose bolts anywhere in the District.

The first conversation regarding a bicycle roadside assistance program took place at an HBID On-Street Operations Committee meeting in early Fall of 2016. HBID has provided light roadside assistance to motorists in the District free of charge for ten years. The committee recognized that HBID was in the unique position to introduce a similar service for cyclists. Offering that same benefit of free roadside assistance to cyclists seemed like a natural extension of HBID's existing services and created a reliable support system for people who were or are on the fence about biking into the city center.

HBID reached out to BiCi Co., a local, bicycle-focused, non-profit organization dedicated to providing an opportunity to improve youth and adult safety and sustainable transportation. BiCi Co. provided a four-hour maintenance training course and the necessary equipment for six HBID Ambassadors.

The program was officially launched at a ceremony celebrating National Bike To Work Day in downtown Hartford. From there HBID began a grassroots campaign to raise awareness of the bicycle roadside program with both residents of Hartford and the massive workforce that commutes into the city each day. This included handing out roughly 5,000 postcards and strategically placing them everywhere from libraries to residential lobbies to the lobbies of several major employers.

Within the first six months of the program the HBID Ambassadors responded to 78 calls for bicycle roadside assistance. The program is currently used as a key component in presentations regarding transportation in the city. One such presentation lured LimeBike to Hartford, where the bike share operation will launch citywide this April. The program also received international attention in the press for being the first of its kind, with news stories running in the U.K., Canada, and virtually every major

metropolitan news outlet in the U.S. Feedback from cyclists living in the city, as well as those now choosing to commute more often via bicycle, has been exclusively positive.

The HBID's Bicycle Roadside Assistance Program is simple and easy to replicate. The training was done easily and inexpensively by qualified mechanics. The basic repair tool kit cost fewer than two hundred dollars and can be used until the tools themselves need to be replaced. There is a minimal inventory cost to make sure Ambassadors have patch kits and several sizes of tire tubes on hand for repairs, but at a few dollars each, it's well worth it.

Hartford, like most cities all over the world, is looking to reduce car use and encourage additional transit options. HBID's Bicycle Roadside Assistance program:

- Provides a reliable support system for people looking to reduce their personal carbon footprint.
- Provides support for current suburban bicycle commuters and employees commuting into the District from city neighborhoods.
- Helps move Hartford towards the goal of alleviating automobile traffic in Hartford's commercial core.
- Provides support for property owners looking to promote bicycle usage among residents, tenants, and employees.
- Is used as a recruitment tool by employers as a highlighted amenity.

The Hartford Business Improvement District has partnered with an array of organizations to help move the city's forward-thinking, bicycle friendly policies into practice, including the Mayor's Office, Capitol Region Council of Governments, Leadership Greater Hartford, Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs, Business For Downtown Hartford, and the Hartford Police Department. HBID will also be executing a full marketing plan for the program, and will continue to work with various organizations, employers, residents, and commuters in and around Hartford to grow bicycle ridership in the city.

The growth of this program and the positive reaction from our local community and bicycle advocates nationwide, has exceeded all expectations.