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Zilkha Center

Biking at Williams

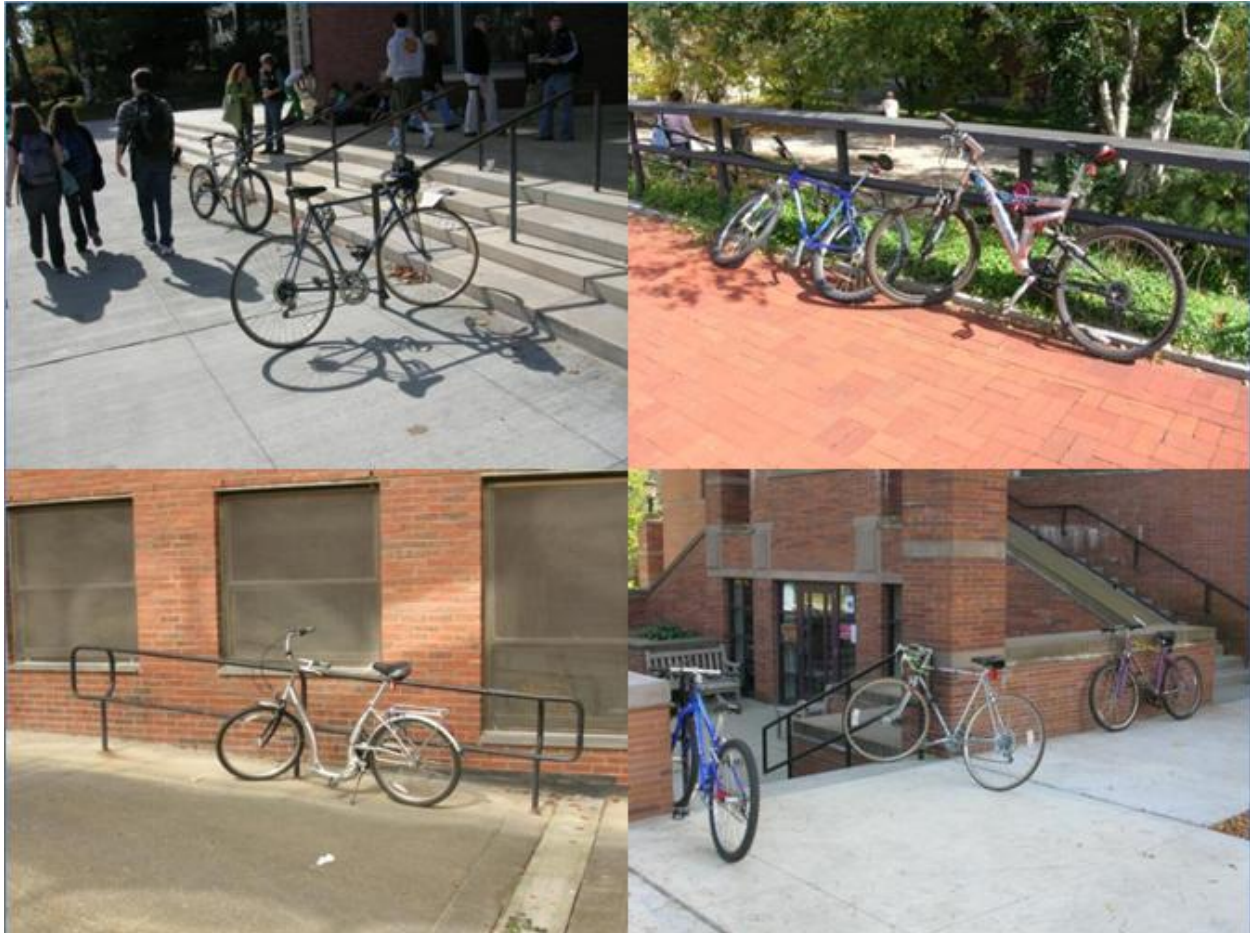
The goal of my fall semester project for the Zilkha Center for Environmental Initiatives was to evaluate the status of biking on the Williams College campus. Specifically, I was interested in what specific infrastructure improvements might be needed to facilitate biking. I also investigated the feasibility of a bike sharing or bike rental program on campus.

The first step of the project was to establish a registry of all the bike racks on campus. I wanted to determine which racks were heavily used and which weren't. Using this information, I could more accurately suggest potential locations for new racks. In addition to creating the registry, I also noted areas where bikes were placed away from bike racks. Creation of the registry involved photographing each bike rack and location of concern. Each of these locations was then plotted on a map of the campus.

There are 51 bike racks on the Williams campus. The majority of them are located at dorms and academic buildings. Two of the racks are covered; this design feature provides protection from the elements and the introduction of more of these types of racks was considered as one of the possible infrastructure improvements. These racks exist only at Prospect and Tyler Annex.



Bikes are generally strewn about near the entrances to several dorms and school buildings. Though open bike racks are available in the vicinity of several of these locations, they appear to be too far away for students to consistently use them. Two dorms with significant loose bikes are Gladden and Morgan. Cole Field House also has a significant number of bikes that are strewn about. Bikes can be found chained up to stair rails in the Greylock Quad, at Paresky, beside Morgan, and beneath Driscoll and Prospect. These bikes are a hazard to those trying to negotiate these stairs. It is evident from this study of bike racks at Williams that more are needed where students tend to throw their bikes on the ground or lock them up at inappropriate locations.



The next step of the project was to conduct an online survey of student bike usage. The survey provided valuable information about the status of biking on the Williams campus. 59% of respondents do not have a bike on campus. Of those that do have bikes, 86% use their bike to get to class, 78% to get to extracurricular activities, and 71% to run errands. The majority of students (45%) ride their bike every day during the day (97%). During the winter, 65% of students keep their bikes inside their dorm. None of them keep it off campus. During the summer, 82% of students bring their bike home with them.

The majority of respondents (60%) indicated that there are enough bike racks on campus where they bike. Those that did not think there were enough suggested more bike racks at Paresky,

Mission, Schow, Sawyer, Morgan, Gladden, Cole, and Chandler. Several also indicated the need for covered bike racks.

The main (42%) limiting factor for those without a bike on campus was transporting the bike to campus. There was also concern about bike theft and vandalism.

In general, students indicated a need for more covered bike racks, off-season storage, and affordable bikes. 56% of respondents said that they would use a bike rental program to gain access to a bike

I had a conversation about my project with Paul from *The Spoke*. He described his interest in the summer rental program using bikes purchased by the school for an on-campus bike rental program. Historically, he had stayed away from bike rentals because of the overhead cost of purchasing the bikes despite people's interest in renting bikes during the summer. He recommended internally geared, low-tech bikes. The storage situation at *The Spoke* is adequate for thirty or so bikes; they have access to storage next door to their retail space. As for storage beyond the space at the retail place, Paul has access to a water-sealed warehouse-sized barn where he keeps around 75 bikes and bike equipment and parts. The main challenge with the storage of his bikes is the transport of bikes there. He can generally put a few in the back of his station wagon, but more than 10 requires the use of a larger vehicle.

Based on Paul's conversations with Williams students and his observations of the campus, he would recommend the installation of lean-tos or covered bike racks. He described a type of farmer's chain lube designed for winterizing tractors; by applying this substance to bike chains you could better preserve bikes stored outside during the winter.

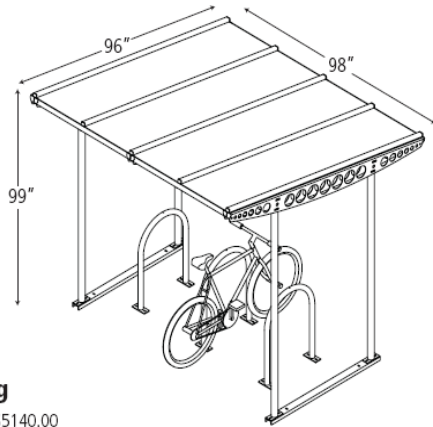
As for storage of bikes during the off-season, Paul mentioned massive barns owned by Williams that were part of the old Mt. Hope Farm, near the Hopper. One could collect bikes on a truck at the end of the year and transport them to one of these barns. Certain representatives from the college have indicated that the use of these barns would be nearly impossible because they are already filled with equipment.

Using the information gathered from the bike rack registry, the survey, and the conversation with Paul, we discussed specific infrastructure improvements. We asked for the input of the former College Council co-presidents, Peter Nurnberg and Jeremy Goldstein. We concluded that, given the current economic conditions, we would limit our improvements to the construction of a new covered bike rack and rearrangements of the existing racks.

The site for a new covered bike rack was selected based on my observations from the registry, suggestions from the survey, and the desire to place this new example of bike infrastructure at a centrally accessible and visible location on campus. After careful considerations of the options, Morgan was chosen. A meeting with David Fitzgerald was scheduled to choose an appropriate site for the covered bike rack, a Dero Aero shelter. Three potential locations around Morgan were proposed for future development.

Aero Shelter

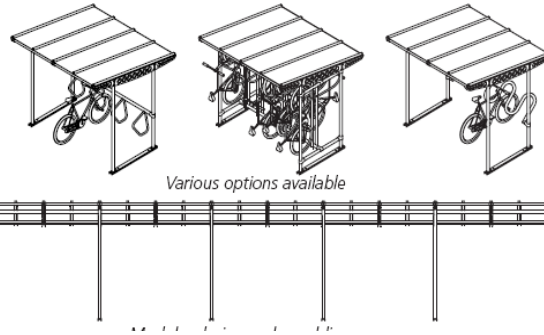
Parks 6-12 bikes depending on configuration



Pricing

Empty = \$5140.00
with 6 horizontal bike parking spaces = \$5480.00
with 12 vertical bike parking spaces = \$6210.00

The Aero shelter is designed for building owner and bicyclist alike. It provides necessary protection against sun, rain, and snow while maintaining space efficiency and cost-effectiveness. This modular 8'x8' shelter features a polycarbonate roof that protects from sun while allowing some light to pass for added security. Simple, modular construction has open sides for maximum accessibility and allows for easy installation and future expansion. It is available as a stand-alone, with Space Saver vertical racks or traditional horizontal parking options.



The plans to create a bike sharing or bike rental program have been postponed indefinitely until funding and a source of bikes can be secured.

The next steps to improving biking at Williams will involve the approval and construction of the new covered back rack at Morgan, the reorganization of the existing bike racks, and the formation of an off-season bike collection and storage program.