

UMSAEP Report

Visit to Cape Town March 18, 2018 – April 1, 2018

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1. Overview

In South Africa, 2 million individuals are living in sub-standard unsafe housing, known as townships (Statistics South Africa, 2016). Reliable transportation is one of the greatest needs of these individuals that is not being met. Transportation is key to accessing basic goods, employment, and healthcare. Bicycles are a reliable, low-cost solution. Anecdotal evidence suggests that access to a bike has greater impacts on the individual than just access to transportation. The purpose of the UWC-UMKC partnership was to conduct a study to examine how ownership of a bike and learning basic maintenance skills as well as safe and productive riding impact disadvantaged peoples' (1) *physical health*, (2) *access to health care*, (3) *self-esteem*, (4) *social capital*, and (5) *employment status*. Additionally, Qualitative interviews will be conducted to identify best practices associated with positive sustainable outcomes of earn-a-bike type programs. Non-profit agencies that deliver earn-a-bike programming were asked to participate in interviews and help identify participants who have earned a bike through their agency, specifically, Bicycle Empowerment Network and Qhubeka.

Through UMSAEP, I was connected with Dr. Barry Andrews of UWC in fall of 2017. We quickly began making connections with key stakeholders of bicycle related non-profits, specifically the Bicycle Empowerment Network (BEN). Dr. Andrews and I regularly communicated with Andrew Wheeler, a founder of BEN, in preparation for my trip.

2. Description of Activities

During the visit to Cape Town, we met with several stakeholders invested in bicycle programming and infrastructure in the Cape Town area. My visit included meetings with the following organizations:

- We first met with Andrew Wheeler, who provided a robust history and an update on current bicycle practices and infrastructure improvements in the Cape Town area. As the founder of BEN, he was also able to in-depth information about the organization. We discussed programming to encourage bicycling including youth earn-a-bike programs, safe routes to school programs, cycling infrastructure, bike to work days, other transportation challenges and safety concerns. Through Andrew, we were able to set up several other meetings with bicycle organizations. We were able to understand better how BEN distributed bikes in regions throughout South Africa.
- We then met with Stellenbosch Cycling/Fietsry, represented by Dawid Botha. Stellenbosch is a more bike friendly community, with a large student population who utilize bicycles frequently. This organization focuses on increasing access, awareness, and safety as related to bicycling.

- While in Stellenbosch, we visited the University of Stellenbosch, of which, provides a robust bicycle rental program for students known as “Matie Bikes”. We met with the team that manages this program and discussed research opportunities, including survey data collection with students.
- Lastly, we met with Mr. Bean, an operator of one of BEN’s empowerment centers. Through these centers, a member of a disadvantaged community is provided business training, bicycle mechanic training, and is given access to purchase used bicycles for a low-cost. The operators can then repair the bikes and sell them for a profit. Their center, then acts as a community bike shop for any future repairs needed.

3. Challenges

While we had several promising meetings, several challenges presented during the visit and post visit.

- Earn-a-bike programs are primarily youth focused in South Africa; therefore, our intentions to evaluate adult earn-a-bikes were misguided. However, we did not learn of this until in-person meetings during the visit. While preparing for the visit, we were assured that we would be able to survey earn-a-bike recipients; we were never able to connect with them. One reason given was that, It is common for low-income South Africans to change sim cards in their cell phones regularly, so communication via cell phone is limited or impossible.
- A meeting set with Qhubeka, an organization that conducts earn-a-bike programs with youth was cancelled and was unable to be rescheduled during my visit.
- While we were visiting with Stellenbosch University, we verbally agreed to conduct a survey with students to examine the impacts of the bike rental program that is available to all students. However, after returning to the US, the administrators no longer responded to communication efforts.
- Mr. Bean found much of his low-cost bike sales success was with sales at flea markets to individuals who were taking the bikes across the country border where bikes were even more inaccessible. Creating another barrier to access people who may benefit from having access to a bicycle.

4. Future

Dr. Andrews and I continue to communicate frequently discussing leads for new partnerships and research ideas.

- We have plans to examine secondary data sets that examine transportation and bicycling in South Africa. Once we identify the relevant data set, we can analyze the data and prepare a manuscript.
- Dr. Andrews and I submitted a Letter of Intent to apply to a Kresge Foundation grant, “Advancing Student Transportation Solutions”. The funding opportunity identifies South Africa as a preferred site for this research and supports three types of applications, a planning project, a research project, or a hybrid project. We selected the planning options, which will allow us to review the current transportation modes and challenges of students attending UWC. We then will work with community organizations to develop solutions to the transportation challenges these students face, including but

not limited to expanding bike options for the students. We will be notified July 2019 if we are invited to submit a full proposal for the funding opportunity.

- Lastly, we continue to seek out partnerships with local agencies advocating or conducting bike programming to collaborate with to further our research interests.

5. Summary

In summary, receiving support from the UMSAEP has proved to be a valuable experience despite initial setbacks. Both Dr. Andrews and I are committed to advancing our programs of research through this collaboration. We still foresee delivering a manuscript examining bicycling in South Africa.