



## Conducting Bicycle Counts

A count is the process of recording the number of people traveling by a specific mode, whether by bicycle, on foot, or some other means. A count can record other data, such as gender, helmet use, and direction of travel, but at its most basic tells the number of people using a mode at a specific location during a specific period of time. Counts are a great tool; before and after counts help you measure the impact of your project for reporting purposes and provide data that support future projects and funding for those projects. Counts help define if and where additional improvements are needed and whether existing treatments are working as intended. Counts are also good marketing tools, helping you advocate more effectively for bike/ped infrastructure by showing how many people are already using the facilities that exist.

The National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project (NBPD), a collaboration between Alta Planning + Design and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Pedestrian and Bicycle Council (<http://bikepeddocumentation.org/>), provides some great information, including case studies on forecasting and counting, how counts influence bike/ped programs, and adjustment factors to help you extrapolate counts to annual figures. NBPD also published a report (NBPD: Automatic Count Technologies, June 2009) that reviews different automatic count technologies, including non-detection rates, where different counters are best used, and cost ranges.

The NBPD Downloads section has sample bike and ped count sheets, surveys, and information on how to train counters. Some good advice if you are conducting manual counts:

- Train data collectors in the field **before** they begin their timed collection! Accuracy and consistency are key, so it is important to identify the different types of counts and eliminate questions/confusion in the counters' minds.
- Choose a good count form: some list directions/information being collected, some have a map, diagram, or picture where you record
- Identify locations that need more than one data collector
- Prioritize data items: the count is the most important – then what? Gender? Helmet/no helmet? Direction?