

BMTS Article Digest May - July 2010

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

The following is a compilation of articles that may be of interest to BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members. This and past digests can also be accessed in the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page of www.bmtsonline.com.

Scott

Take a look at the National Center for Bicycling & Walking's newsletter, **CenterLines**. You can also arrange to have it emailed directly to you.

See <http://www.bikewalk.org/newsletterarchives.php>

CenterLines is the bi-weekly electronic news bulletin of the National Center for Bicycling & Walking. **CenterLines** is our way of quickly delivering news and information you can use to create more walkable and bicycle-friendly communities.

The following is a link for the AARP report titled, *Making New York a Complete Streets State – A Report on Pedestrian Safety in Five Upstate Counties*”.

http://assets.aarp.org/www.aarp.org/_cs/elec/making_ny_a_complete_streets_state_report.pdf

pressconnects.com

Owego teen struck by car

JULY 7, 2010, 10:46 AM

An Owego teen landed in Wilson Regional Medical Center after she was struck by a car early Wednesday on Route 434 in Apalachin, according to state police in Owego.

At 12:51 a.m., 17-year-old Jami Gunzenhauser of Vestal was driving a gray 2007 Kia westbound on the roadway near the intersection with East Main Street in Apalachin. When Gunzenhauser moved into the left turn-only lane, she struck 19-year-old Tamara Valdes of Owego, who was standing in the unlit, dark roadway, police said.

After she was struck with the front driver's side, Valdes fell onto the vehicle's hood and then into the roadway, police said. Gunzenhauser, who was traveling with a passenger, stopped.

The Apalachin Emergency Squad transported Valdes, who sustained non-life-threatening head and hip injuries, to Wilson, police said.

pressconnects.com

Bicyclist collides with trooper vehicle in WP

JULY 6, 2010, 12:17 PM

State police in Sidney said a marked trooper vehicle was involved in a collision with a bicyclist Monday in the Village of Whitney Point.

The crash happened at about 9:42 a.m. at the intersection of Liberty and Collins streets, state police investigators said.

Troopers allege Mary M. Smith, 47, of Arlington, Va., was riding a bicycle east on Liberty Street and passed a stop sign at the intersection of Collins and Liberty streets. Troopers said Smith entered the intersection into the path of a trooper making a left turn from Collins onto Liberty Street.

Troopers say Smith struck the trooper vehicle with her bicycle and was ejected from her bicycle onto the windshield of the trooper vehicle.

The Virginia woman is in serious condition, suffering head and facial injuries, investigators said. She was taken to Wilson Regional Medical Center in Johnson City.

The investigation into the crash is continuing, troopers said.

pressconnects.com

BOCES students repair, give away bikes

JUNE 18, 2010, 7:38 AM

The BOCES Recycled Bikes Program at the Vestal Learning Center fixed up 25 bicycles this year and gave away 13. Students used the remaining bikes to develop a Healthy Challenge program, committed to on the Rail Trail on selected days.

Now in its third year, the program is modeled after "Tools for Life," a project started in New York City to help with transportation and environmental issues and later evolved in effort to help redirect kids who are considered at risk. Goals include developing a sense of belonging; learning a skill while fixing the bikes; understanding concepts such as recycling, safety education, teamwork and self-respect; and generosity by donating the bikes to children who can't afford them.

Under lead supervision of staff member Dan Wells, students developed a clean and workable "Bike Shop" to fix donated bikes. Students Kiernan MacMyne, Dashawn Pabon and JoJo Holmes headed instruction and taught skills for bike repair. Other staff members worked one on one with students.

pressconnects.com

Binghamton man pedaling to South America on Zen-speed

BY TOM WILBER • TWILBER@GANNETT.COM • JUNE 8, 2010, 6:25 PM

One day, Greg McCausland took off and headed south, like a migratory bird.

Trusting instinct over logic, the 41-year-old Binghamton social studies teacher quit his job and cashed out his pension. He rebuilt his mountain bike into a touring bicycle to carry provisions and camping gear.

On a cold morning in late November, after a few friends said goodbye at his small home on Binghamton's South Side, he began pedaling south on Pennsylvania Avenue and disappeared from view.

Six months and thousands of miles later, he is in Panama, and a long way from his journey's end. He expects to spend the next year or so pedaling around Latin America, working his way south to the Strait of Magellan, near the southern tip of South America.

Why? There are many reasons, although McCausland struggles with the question that seems to be so relevant to everybody but him.

"I thought about having a 'cause,'" he blogged recently. "But I am really not going to solve any global crisis sitting on my (butt) . . . pedaling... And, it struck me as disingenuous because I was going to do this no matter what.

"I do believe adventures like this have a larger intrinsic value and that is what makes it worth sharing. I also recognize that most grand adventures entail financial risk/shambles/ruin. Besides, ruin is a relative thing -- I could always get a job."

McCausland's wanderlust comes as no big surprise to his friends. While he relishes being outdoors and far from the limits of convention, he is also a committed student of people and human nature, with an academic background in anthropology and Latin American studies, and extensive travel experience since his youth.

On an outdoor adventure with McCausland, the conversations oscillate from the technical and practical circumstances of the moment - snow conditions, gear, route finding, water sources -- to musings on world affairs, history, philosophy, music, food or the fascinating and sometimes bleak ironies of existence.

After surviving traffic, border crossings and some miscreants who tried to take all of his things in a remote outpost in Mexico, he almost came to a bad end by falling into an open manhole near Panama.

He posted a picture of the hazard on his website, along with this post:

"I wonder if anyone keeps stats on how many people fall into these things? A brief Google reveals open manholes to be a worldwide problem, especially in Asia during the rainy season when you can get swept away and drown . . . What a crappy way to go. However, in places where people walk the streets to collect aluminum cans for weight (not deposit) you can be sure any unsecured hunk of iron (like a manhole cover) is going to be harvested."

Much of McCausland's time is occupied with mundane logistical and practical aspects of life on the road -- waiting at customs, riding for hours and days on end into a relentless headwind over a forsaken landscape, or enduring seemingly interminable rainy spells on the saddle or hunkered in a tent.

Amid mind-numbing tedium, an inevitable aspect of most worthwhile adventures and life in general, McCausland seeks something called "the flow" -- a collection of circumstances requiring such total concentration that nothing exists or matters outside the moment and the event. The doer and the action become one. It typically involves a physically demanding and sometimes dramatic feat -- skiing through rock ledges through a steep narrow chute, paddling in rapids or navigating a precarious ridge on a mountain bike.

Some might call it thrill-seeking. A psychiatrist might class it as adrenalin dependency. For McCausland, it's kind of a spiritual exercise. It's a form of freedom, and it's at the root of the name of his website and travelogue, Devotion Frees.

"Complete self-reliance," as he calls it, is a central component of his travel style. He reflected on this during a phone chat recently as he sat at an Internet café near Panama City after a 90-mile ride.

"If you are on a 16,000-foot pass in the Andes with your bike on your shoulder and it starts snowing ... If anything goes wrong, there is nothing or nobody there to save you. You are completely focused on the moment, and not worried about other things. It's just you.

There is nobody there to witness it, and it doesn't really matter. There is clarity in these types of moments akin to prayer and meditation."

Self-reliance, he adds, is elusive and largely unattainable in its purest sense.

"It is a difficult thing to achieve in our society and even my own journey is made possible through the support of family and friends. Nobody lives in a vacuum."

While he "enjoys his own company" -- often his only choice on long isolated stretches of road -- he also relishes the company of others and makes new friends easily. His travel log is full of pictures and stories of people he has befriended in various countries.

A tattoo of Pan on his shoulder reflects his seize-the-day philosophy. The Bohemian spirit, half man, half goat, playing a lute, has many manifestations. McCausland likes his association with shepherds, flocks, mountain wilds and carefree-but-wise approach to life.

For all the adventure encountered by a stranger in a faraway land, McCausland's eye-opening experiences tend to deal with the non-eventful elements of daily life and the commonality he sees from place to place.

"I'm just seeing folks going about their daily lives," he said, "which at their core are not that different from the concerns of every other human on the planet -- people living their lives looking for happiness or at a minimum trying to survive. People are essentially good and people are all essentially the same. People can be so kind and helpful but you have to open yourself to the possibility."

That can be as rewarding as finding the flow on an isolated mountain pass.

Spin City

Written by Molly English-Bowers



Twelve years ago, the FOCUS (Forging Our Community's United Strength) Greater Syracuse Vision Fair received a surprise answer to its question on how to best improve the area: Build bicycle and walking paths wherever possible. "It stunned everyone there that No. 1 was building leisure trails," notes Jon Cooley, director

of recreation and public programs for Onondaga County Parks. And while that group consensus didn't result in an immediate burst of trail construction, some progress has been made in that regard.



Loop the Lake—a 13-mile, linked trail around Onondaga Lake—remains a dream, but the city of Syracuse has reconfigured some roadways to create, if not dedicated bike lanes, then at least marked-pavement bike routes. A good portion of Route 31, as it wends its way from Cicero to Baldwinsville, has signage indicating that it's a bike route, but the traffic-heavy corridor from Morgan Road to Gaskin Road leaves much to be desired.

Part of the problem there in the town of Clay, and in many spots, is motorist ignorance, apathy and even hostility toward their two-wheeled colleagues. The bottom line is that bicycles are subject to and allowed the same courtesy of motor vehicle law—but there's always a smart-ass out there that refuses to yield the right-of-way or tries to turn into traffic even though the cyclist *is* traffic.



Syracuse musician Tim Herron began road biking about three years ago, and doesn't see an improvement in motorist courtesy, especially once you get outside city limits. "The North Shore of Oneida Lake, along Route 49, it's frightening up there," he says. "I've never gotten run off the road but I got buzzed pretty close a couple times by these guys driving giant trucks. It just felt to me like they were doing it on purpose. Now, when I worked at Elmcrest Children's Center, on Salt Springs Road, and lived on Tipperary Hill, I would bike straight through the city and never had any problems."

Better driver education would help, but so would a change in the culture of Central New York toward people who aren't in a car. (Truth be told, however, bad driving seems to be on the upswing regardless of the increase of cyclists on the roadways.) It'll be a gradual process, but with the added emphasis on the environment and healthy habits, we may see as many bicycles downtown as we do cars and Centro buses.

And let's not inject the weather as a reason to commute to work in our cozy cars. Of the top 10 most bikeable cities, according to *Bicycling* magazine, seven are in northern climes, places that receive a fair amount of snow and can be pretty darned cold in February.

"There's a popular misconception about Syracuse being too cold to bike," notes Paul Mercurio, a transportation planner for the city's Department of Public Works. "It's a complete myth. Portland, Ore. {perennially No. 1 until Minneapolis dethroned it last year}, is not a warm place. In Europe, where biking is huge, in Amsterdam, Copenhagen—those are not warm places. The cooler weather climates are better for bikers, in fact, because you don't get sweaty biking to work."

Bicycling magazine cites Minneapolis and Portland, Ore., as Nos. 1 and 2 on the list, followed by Boulder, Colo.; Seattle; Eugene, Ore.; San Francisco; Madison, Wisc.; New York City; Tucson, Ariz.; and Chicago. "Seven of those 10 are places that get substantial snow," Cooley notes. "Worldwide, of course, Europe is far ahead of us. Amsterdam is listed as the top cycling city in the world, where 40 percent of commuters are on bikes. Copenhagen, Denmark, has 32 percent bike commuters."

In an effort to draw attention to the bikeability of the Salt City, the Onondaga County Health Department put together Cycle in the City, a family-friendly event, for Saturday, May 15, from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Participants should gather at the Museum of Science and Technology, 500 S. Franklin St., for guided 5- and 10-mile rides through the city, as well as a bike-safety rodeo geared toward kids ages 4 to 12 put on by Syracuse Bicycle. The event is free; for more information, call 435-3280.



“The group didn’t want to bite off more than it could chew with this event,” says Cooley, a member of the Cycle the City committee, “and if you’re looking to point out that you can bike in the city reasonably safely, then it really shouldn’t have to be a special event. The ultimate goal is not to close roads but to use the paved surfaces to ride your bike. This small program, which I hope we get hundreds to participate in, will be a statement that we’re behind making Onondaga County and the city a walkable, bikeable community.”

Wheels of Fortune

Syracuse currently has 12 miles of bike lanes scattered throughout the East Side, down South Salina Street to south of Seneca Turnpike, and on Water Street heading into downtown from near Teall Avenue. This year, new lanes along Erie Boulevard West from downtown to the city line will become a reality. “The overall vision,” Mercurio says, “is to make sure we have a north, south, east, west connection into downtown.” To help matters along, last year the administration of ex-Mayor Matt Driscoll got eight bike racks installed throughout downtown, at a cost of \$250 per two-bike rack.

“Not only are these bike racks a warm and charming addition to the downtown landscape,” said Driscoll at their May 1, 2009, installation, “they are another feature of Syracuse as a sustainable community, encouraging people to adopt a healthy and environmentally friendly lifestyle.”

Funding exists to develop more bike lanes in the city—it’s just hung up in the bureaucracy of the federal government. Mercurio calls that plan, slated for 2013-2014, the Waverly Project, and it will involve a lane reduction—what, in parlance, is referred to as a lane diet—on several

key streets that abut Syracuse University.

“Already there is a bike lane on Colvin and Euclid, where it meets Comstock,” Mercurio says. “The recommendation is to continue the bike lane to Waverly and have it go down Waverly and then have bike lanes down South Crouse facing north. We have been budgeted for the money. We requested \$1 million to do that. It may be a low-end, and we may need to go to the county for more funding. There’s no reason why we can’t do this. If you have a road network that isn’t complete, it’s not going to make you want to drive a lot.

“If you build it, they will come,” he continues, acknowledging the *Field of Dreams* cliché. “That’s been proven in New York City and in Portland, Ore., that you build the biking infrastructure so it can be used.”

Musician Hanna Richardson commutes to her job as associate deputy director of the Renee Crown University Honors Program at SU using her classic English three-speed bike. Her experience illuminates part of the problems bike commuters face. “It’s five minutes on the bike but I avoid the main routes into SU because the



traffic is so nutty when I'm riding," she says. "I only get onto Euclid when I have to and then I get on the sidewalk, even though I know I'm not supposed to be there."

While that portion of Euclid Avenue, from Westcott Street to Comstock Avenue, is marked for bike traffic, both sides also serve as spots for Syracuse's infamous alternate-street parking. "Euclid is a marked bike route," Mercurio points out, "but it's also a share-the-road facility. There is marking and we have signs up that say share the road with cyclists. It's not an official bike lane, by federal standards or in the traditional sense, but it's us trying to make the best of what we have. Still, when cars are parking on the left side of the road, the right side is free. It's confusing because cars are only parking on one side of the street at a time."

Despite the impediments, Richardson intends to keep commuting to work, by bike, when the weather cooperates. "I did it all last year starting in May, and was able to ride through early December. Now I'm starting up again. I don't want to pay for parking, and it's good for my health and it's fun and it makes me feel young."

So it's baby steps toward the development of a bike-friendly culture in Syracuse. But the quest is not impossible. "If we're going to develop a bike culture and get community leadership to embrace connective pathways and trails," Cooley says, "people need to see it happening and people need to participate. And people need to see it in other places. In New York City, there are hundreds of miles of bike paths, and they're adding scores of miles every year. The 240,000 people who commute to work on bicycles every day there represent 1.8 million commuter miles."

In fact, the explosion in bike commuting in the Big Apple is nothing short of remarkable. Witness a new monthly column in the Sunday *New York Times* Metropolitan section, and a blog, called "Spokes." Then there is the 66 percent increase in cycling in New York City over the past two years, according to Janette Sadik-Khan, the city's transportation commissioner who happens to commute on her bike. Currently, more than 500,000 New Yorkers ride their bikes instead of hopping into their cars.

On that *Bicycling* magazine list of the top 10 bike-friendly cities, New York City ranks seventh, which is pretty stunning to those of us who visualize rude, honking motorists and what seems like a million buses rumbling through Times Square. If developing a bike culture can work in a city of 8 million people, only the naysayers would pooh-pooh the idea for Onondaga County and its 600,000 residents. Interestingly, Rochester placed 50th on the list, thanks in part to the Rochester Bicycling Club's 300-plus ride-map library.

"Downtown Syracuse, from my perspective," Cooley says, "there's six lanes of pavement on most streets, and they're not all needed for vehicles. If New York City can reduce lanes on Broadway, then we can absolutely do that here in Syracuse without spending a lot of money."

The largest expenditure from creating bike lanes, points out Mercurio, is not implementing the road diet and reducing the existing roadways from four lanes to three or even two, but maintaining the bike lanes once they're in place. "It's not very expensive to put in a bike lane; the expense comes from maintaining it. Every bike lane you put in is that much more paint that you need to restripe each year. Along Meadowbrook, the paint wears away quickly; it's just an unfortunate condition of our weather around here. And it's not an upfront expense; it's a down-the-road, maintenance issue."



Pedal Pushers

Like most culture-changing initiatives, getting something done requires cooperation among a slew of entities—government, educational, community and business. “Government responds to the needs of a community, and a key need is to support the businesses that help the community thrive economically,” says Wayne Miner, president of the Onondaga Cycling Club (OCC). “Government is constrained by budget and by policy. By engaging companies, you’re creating a larger economic force.”



Corporations are often considered conservative, sluggish dinosaurs that are slow to change with the times. But those that recognize the importance of jumping on board with, or even spearheading, novel initiatives often attract the best and the brightest. Miner lists a handful of Syracuse corporations that support their employees biking to work or on their lunch hour. And it’s not as easy as telling a 9-to-5 worker he can park his bike in his office or cubicle. Showers are necessary to a friendly work environment, for starters.

“It’s a mixed bag of companies that support cycling, or not,” he says. “I sent out some survey questions a year ago in this regard. Some employers aren’t particularly supportive; others are. Those include Upstate Hospital, Syracuse University, CXtec, SRC and Bristol-Myers Squibb.

“There are some employees that both have those facilities and some that support the opportunity,” he continues. “SRC, for example, is a great company: They have a cycling culture because they have a place where employees can lock up their bikes under a roof and shower facilities. They either commute to work or during lunch hour get out and go on a ride.”

Indeed, says SRC director of communications and public relations Lisa Mondello, “It’s not uncommon to see employees in their biking gear

going through the halls and heading out to take a ride at lunch.” SRC installed bike racks in an enclosed back lobby, with shower facilities and locker rooms, and promotes an in-house wellness program that encourages people to exercise. “The environmental aspects of employees who bike to work is very important to us.”

A club since the late 1960s, the OCC is the largest and oldest cycling association in Central New York, with nearly 500 members. Steady growth has occurred over the last few years, which Miner attributes to the growing popularity of triathlon, although the club’s membership peaked at 800 many years ago.

“The organization has a long history of supporting and developing cycling at all levels. But not just the racing. The idea is promoting and supporting cycling as part of a healthy lifestyle, and that includes commuting. It’s not always easy to get from one location to another, but many do. We have one member that commutes almost daily from Memphis right into downtown, a doctor who works at Upstate Hospital, and a colleague who commutes from Cazenovia to Bristol on a regular basis.”

Beyond promoting the sport as a healthy lifestyle, the OCC focuses on community engagement. As such, it is hosting its largest event of the year, the 16th Tour de Syracuse, which takes place over two days and attracts participants from across the Northeast and Canada. “It predominantly focuses on the amateurs in the sport, as well as the Lance Armstrong Junior Race Series (LAJRS), designed to get 10- to 18-year-olds into the sport,

and to develop some of these young people. Some of these late teens have futures as professionals, if they choose.”

A week after the decidedly more casual Cycle the City, the Syracuse Criterium, several .9-mile loops around Onondaga Park, depending on which race you choose, starts at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 22. A kids’ race, at 12:30 p.m., for ages 2 to 14, also takes place around Hiawatha Lake, in Onondaga Park, accessible from Roberts Road in the Strathmore neighborhood. On Sunday, May 23, a Crooked Lake Time Trial, a 3-mile race in Tully, starting at 8:30 a.m., and the Song Mountain Road Race, beginning at 10:30 a.m., offer a variety of distances depending on age and gender of each participant.

Information on all these races can be found at www.tourdesyracuse.com. The OCC’s website, www.onondagacyclingclub.org, provides the skinny on club activities, a link to a membership application (a mere \$20 for adults), maps and bike routes, upcoming races and competitions, group rides and a club listserv for posting concerns, questions and answers. “We are always looking for ways to reach out to people, and this opportunity with the county, Cycle the City, is a great way to get people engaged in the sport,” Miner says.

Although he doesn’t consider Syracuse a particularly rider-friendly city, Syracuse Bicycle co-owner Paul Komanecky remains hopeful. “There’s not too many places to store your bike once you get downtown, there’s not showers when you get to work, there’s not that many bike lanes. Hopefully, we’ll start to see it. More people ride to work than ever before, and I think eventually we’re going to get there. As more riders get on the road, it keeps the drivers aware, and people get a little more accustomed to it.”

Like tennis, cycling is one of those lifelong sports that you can pursue as casually or as avidly as you like. But unlike outdoor tennis, you can cycle around town probably 10 months out of the year, and even opt to tool to work occasionally. If all the pieces fall into place, that is.

“Will people bike to work? Absolutely,” claims Cooley. “So many of us would love to if we could do it safely, or if we knew where the routes are. There are thousands of people out there within the metro area and the close suburbs who absolutely would be bicycling to work and bicycling to play if we can promote better what’s existing and then build the bandwagon. The infrastructure is there; now we have to lead people to it.”

The Washington Post

Expanded bike-sharing program to link D.C., Arlington

By Christy Goodman
Washington Post Staff Writer
Sunday, May 23, 2010; C04

The District and Arlington County are expanding a bike-sharing program to create the largest regional network in the United States, transportation officials announced Friday.

[Arlington County will create 15 bike-sharing stations](#) in the Pentagon City and Crystal City areas. [The District will update its 10 stations](#) and add 90 more in all eight wards. About 1,100 bikes will be available this fall.

Residents will be able to "pick up a bike in Arlington and drop it off in D.C.," Arlington County Board Chairman Jay Fisetta said to fellow bike enthusiasts in Rosslyn at a Bike to Work Day pit stop. "It is a great system to promote cycling and promote health in Washington."

The expanded program will replace the SmartBike D.C. bike network, created in 2008.

"The response to the bike-sharing program has been unprecedented, and we are pleased to be able to join with Arlington in our expansion efforts," Mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D) said in a statement.

The District program has 1,500 members making more than 100 trips a day on 100 bikes, said James R. Sebastian, a city transportation planner. He said the current network is "maxed out" and that the city is "trying to meet that demand with this new system."

The expansion, which features solar-powered bike-sharing stations, [will be supplied by BIXI](#), which has had great success in Montreal, according to Charlie Denney with [Alta Bicycle Share](#), the operating company. Riders will be able to use a credit card to charge a rental at the station, in addition to memberships available online, he said.

The installation and equipment will cost the District about \$6 million in the first year and Arlington about \$850,000. A combination of federal, state and local funding will pay for the program.

Both jurisdictions think they will recapture much of the expense through membership revenue, bike advertising and station sponsorship in the coming years. Memberships will be \$5 a day, \$30 a month or \$80 a year.

Chris Hamilton, Arlington's commuter services chief, said the way the county's contract is written, other jurisdictions can easily be added. Montgomery County and Alexandria officials were part of the county's contract selection committee, he said.

"We plan to get 4,000 to 5,000 [bikes] in a few years," Hamilton said.

Arlington plans to start that process in 2011 by adding more bike stations in the Rosslyn area, Fisetta said.

"Washington joins the big leagues," Hamilton said. "We join the cities where people enjoy the urban core without a car . . . and that is the future. That is where we are going."
