

Rail corridor purchase a victory for trail advocates

After three years of tangled discussions and negotiations, the Port of Seattle agreed to buy a 42-mile rail corridor in King County—a move that will allow them to develop public trail on 32 miles of the line. The port signed papers May 12 as part of a transfer agreement that will put the rail line into public ownership. The port is paying Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) \$107 million from its tax levy funds while King County Council is paying \$2 million for an easement to build a trail.

"In the end, we ensure that this tremendous public asset is being preserved for public benefit," said King County Executive Ron Sims at a signing ceremony. "My grand-daughter is five and to know that this corridor is going to be in public ownership is an incredible gift."

Sims was the original visionary behind the idea of buying the line, which the railroad wanted to abandon because of declining freight demand. Sims gathered support from many cities along the rail line for the proposed new biking and hiking trail.

A year ago, it looked as if a complicated land-swap arrangement would allow the county to gain control of the line. However, those plans unraveled, as did hopes for securing a deal within BNSF's schedule for selling.

Last winter, local politicians jumped at a new proposal to retain the tracks for commuter rail service. The Bicycle Alliance battled several bills in the state Legislature that could have potentially made building a trail more challenging or even impossible.

In the weeks before the negotiation deadline, BAW supporters and other trail advocates—including Cascade Bicycle Club—rallied to promote rail-banking the line and developing an interim trail. Under the federal rail-banking statute, abandoned railroads can be converted to trails with the understanding that any future rail use would trump the trail.

Since many areas of the BNSF right-of-way in east King County are more than 100 feet wide, BAW and other trail advocates embraced the idea of dual use: trail alongside an active rail line. Providing invaluable public testimony, BAW members and other trail supporters took the dual use message to elected officials in e-mails, letters and face-to-face. BAW vice president King Cushman, who worked on a 2007 Puget Sound Regional Council study detailing development of a trail on the route, was among those who testified before the King County Council.

King County had to pass an ordinance in connection with the easement agreement before the port commissioners could vote on the purchase. Members of the King County Council unanimously voted their support for the acquisition and an inter-local agreement. A week later, port commissioners also voted unanimously for the purchase.

International Biking & Walking Conference Comes to Seattle this September

Seattle will host the 15th Pro Walk/Pro Bike International Symposium this September 2 to 5 at the Westin Hotel. The biennial conference series, begun in 1980, is put on by the Washington DC-based National Center for Bicycling and Walking.

Pro Walk/Pro Bike typically attracts a diverse crowd—government agencies, private companies and non-profit organizations—from the United States, Canada and other countries. This year it is expected to draw between 700 and 1,000 attendees who share passion for and commitment to creating, enhancing and redeveloping their communities to allow increased safe walking and bicycling. This year's conference will also focus on how walking and cycling reduces carbon emissions and promotes healthier lives.

A local host committee was formed to help this conference become a model for how to deliver meaningful changes to 21st century health and mobility in towns and cities. Bicycle Alliance board member King Cushman chairs the host committee, which includes representatives of the Seattle Department of Transportation, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Seattle-King County Health Department, King County Metro, Cascade Bicycle Club, Transportation Choices Coalition, Seattle Metro YMCA, and others.

The host committee developed the 2008 conference theme: Transforming Communities: Beyond Sustainability. "We want attendees to come to the conference and leave equipped with the knowledge to improve conditions in their own communities," said Cushman.

The host committee is also looking into scholarships to allow a good representation of interested groups and individuals to attend the conference from around Washington.

Updates on the conference, including planned sessions, are available at bikewalk.org/conference.php



Bike to Work Still a Novelty

You know this already: May was National Bike-to-Work Month. However, for the majority of the population, May was *Drive-to-Work Month*, just like any other month. In other words, for 85-90% of Washington's workforce, a proclamation that two-wheeled travel is the flavor of the month is about as meaningful as declaring that the last week of April has been reserved as *Administrative Professionals Week*. Unless you happen to be an administrator, the end of April likely passed by you.

As bicycle advocates, we have to remind ourselves that our excitement about Bike-to-Work promotions slip by with, at best, nothing more than a passing curiosity by the rest of the adult working population. There's a reason that someone has not devised the *New York Subway Rider Appreciation Day*: In New York city, only the foolhardy, the image-conscious and the wealthy use cars to get around every day. Nor have mayors across Washington state issued proclamations on the *Drive-Alone-to-Work Day*: here, the majority may think that only the foolhardy, the self-righteous and the ultra-dedicated ride bikes every day.

Let's be honest, unless you work in one of those rare workplaces where biking is the norm, the rest of your colleagues have likely looked askance at you for riding to work year-round.

Across the state, less than two percent of daily work commutes are completed by bike. If bicycle commuting were a corporate brand, the CEO would be looking for a new marketing director. Why is bicycle commuting languishing in the basement of transportation options in Washington State while other communities seem to have come up with a better marketing plan? Higher percentages of people get around by

bike in places like Montreal, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Beijing, and Tokyo than do in any place in the Northwest.

Sure, the answer lies partly in culture and partly in government policy, tradition, maybe even topography. But there is always room for change—and that's where government can have the biggest role. Paris, a city renowned for fast and unforgiving auto traffic, has been lauded for its bike-sharing program, Velib. Less known perhaps are the infrastructure improvements Paris made to make using those bikes safer and more appealing.

Government leaders in this state can talk about addressing global warming and congestion, but unless the rhetoric is matched by a true financial and political commitment to plow funds into infrastructure improvements and to make tough policy decisions that favor cycling, it's only just talk. As bicyclists we may have a tendency to gratefully accept whatever we are offered while, in reality, we may need to do better at stating clearly, "We need more."

We need more education of drivers, we need bike training for all elementary students, we need more trails, we need better designed roads, we need more secure bike parking, we need more employers who give incentives to those who ride, we need auto drivers to pay more of their fair share of the costs associated with driving. In other words, we need a cultural shift in the perception of bikes and policies surrounding cycling.

I'm naturally optimistic, so I believe these changes will happen—maybe even within one generation. Sooner will be better. I look forward to the day when driving a car is a minority activity—like cigarette-smoking has now become. Then I'll even be willing to embrace *Drive-to-Work Day*, just for the novelty.

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Putting the line into public ownership is merely step one in what is likely to be a process lasting at least one year. Hurdle to the trail creation still remain. The Port of Seattle will take public comments and hold hearings on the future of the route. In addition, the Legislature has funded a study to be jointly undertaken by Sound Transit, a three-county transit agency, and the Puget Sound Regional Council to examine the feasibility of some form of transit rail service utilizing the corridor. That study is due to be completed by the end of this year. The US Surface Transportation Board will take four to six months to review the request to rail-bank 32 miles of the route. The remaining 10 miles will retain freight service and are not part of the port-county agreement.

"Getting the rail line into public ownership has been our top priority since we first became involved in the issue," said BAW executive director Gordon Black. "Our job now is to ensure that the trail gets built as quickly as possible and in such a way that it does not get bumped if a passenger train service emerges. There definitely remains much work to be done, but the efforts of trail advocates certainly paid off in getting the port and county to move forward."

The Bicycle Alliance will post updates on meetings and hearings on its web site, bicyclealliance.org.

AUCTION SET FOR OCTOBER 18

Tickets go on sale soon for the annual Bicycle Alliance gala dinner and auction, set for October 18 at the Fisher Pavilion at Seattle Center. Watch your mailbox and bicyclealliance.org web site for more details.

Making bike commutes an Every Day occurrence

A new name is on the staff list at the Bicycle Alliance of Washington: **Every Day** joined the BAW as our commuter specialist. Part of her job



includes managing two contracts from King County Metro — lost bikes and bike lockers.

Day, who moved to the Seattle area a year ago from Portland, has set up home in Kitsap County. "I have grown to love the Puget Sound area," she said. "Seattle

reminds me of my original hometown, San Francisco, and I am excited to get to know its features and culture just as intimately."

Day is getting familiar with the geography of Seattle and the state of Washington. As commuter specialist, she'll be hosting information sessions and lunch-time chats on the joys of commuting by bicycle.

Day, who rides a Rivendell Atlantis, has been known to haul brochures and other bike-related materials in a cargo trailer.

"I am looking forward to expanding my outings, and learning Seattle's many bike routes so I can better do my job here at BAW," she added. "Advocating and educating about biking for a living cannot be beat!"

Commuting question? You can reach Every Day at 206.224.9252, ext.304 or everyd@bicyclealliance.org

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH: JEFF MORAN

Jeff Moran is a versatile cyclist: a daily commuter, cyclocross racer, new father and all-around good guy. Somehow, in addition to his full-time job, graduate school and racing schedule, he has found time for an enormous commitment to the Bicycle Alliance. Jeff has helped in many areas, including several years running our Auction and a two-year stint guiding the entire organization as the President of the board of directors. His enthusiasm, leadership, hard work and dedication have been of incalculable value to the Bicycle Alliance. Thank you, Jeff.

FUN AT THE FABULOUS FOLLY OF FAT

Follow your folly and get ready for another day of antics, costumes, and the most fun you can have on two wheels! Tour de Fat is returning to Seattle on Saturday, August 2. This year the venue is Gasworks Park, with a planned ride west toward Golden Gardens on the Burke-Gilman Trail. As usual, the event encourages outrageously dressed bicyclists and bikes to take part in the morning parade.

Organized by the New Belgium Brewing Company, Tour de Fat is a celebration of cycling, good times and the importance of a hearty laugh. The event includes costumes, parade, music, a beer garden and some truly unusual bikes. Proceeds from Tour de Fat support the Bicycle Alliance of Washington and other non-profit cycling groups.

BAW needs volunteers to make this event a success. There's beer to serve (must be 21) and tickets to take as well as other tasks. Please send an email to bikeinfo@bicyclealliance.org (subject line: Tour de Fat) if you'd like to help out.

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Thank you! The Bicycle Alliance of Washington is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your donation is 100% tax-deductible.

The Bicycle Alliance occasionally exchanges its mailing list with organizations involved in similar issues. If you DO NOT want to have your name exchanged, please check here.

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SPOKANE BIKE MASTER PLAN MOVING FORWARD

City of Spokane planners and Bicycle Advisory Board members were thrilled with the turnout at recent open houses exploring the city's bicycle master plan.

Nearly 350 individuals attended open houses to review maps and documents, ask questions and offer comments. An online survey has generated an additional thousand responses. Many attendees suggested improving bike routes through downtown, making bike improvements along Sunset Highway and finding safe routes across Francis.

Next steps include analyzing the feedback, reworking the maps and reviewing policies. For more information on the Bicycle Master Plan, check spokaneplanning.org/master_bike_plan.htm.

Volunteers Tune Up Bikes for Spokane Students

After an unusually long and snowy winter, dedicated Spokane Bicycle Club volunteers ushered in the best sign of spring for eager young bicycle riders: a workday tuning up 60 BMX bikes for Spokane School District health and fitness classes. The club checks the bikes each spring and fall so that teachers can concentrate on their students and the important safety curriculum for 4th through 6th graders.

The John P. Jundt Head Injury Foundation has provided financial support for Spokane's bicycle education curriculum since 2005. Children learn to fit their bike helmets and check over their bikes for mechanical soundness. They also practice bike handling skills and age-appropriate traffic skills, such as riding on right side of the road, performing hand signals, and obeying traffic laws.

This year, the Jundt Foundation awarded a grant to replace worn tires and parts through the Bicycle Alliance of Washington. The bikes have been in use since 1992 and were purchased with donations from Spokane Firefighters Local #29, the Spokane Police Guild, Aurora Northwest Rotary, The Downtown Rotary Foundation, Qual-Med Health Plan and North Division Bicycle Shop.

The Jundt foundation also provided funds so that mountain bikes used in middle and high school physical education classes will receive a professional tune-up by North Division Bicycle Shop twice a year.

In the last two years, all health and fitness instructors in Spokane Schools were offered a training program, based on *Road One* developed by the League of American Bicyclists, to improve their riding skills and knowledge of safe riding habits. The training was funded by a grant received with the cooperation of the Spokane Regional Chamber of Commerce, Spokane Regional Transportation Council and Spokane School District.



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