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# THE BEE

Friday, October 12, 2012



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# Bike Commute Challenge sends SE riders on the road

Published on Wednesday, October 03, 2012 | Written by [Peter Korchnak](#) |

You may have noticed a larger-than-usual number of bicyclists around town over the past four or five weeks.

September was the month of the Bicycle Transportation Alliance's "Bike Commute Challenge", in which workplaces compete about whose employees can bike to work more.

BCC coordinator Stephanie Noll told THE BEE that the goal of the Challenge is to boost bike commuting both in the Portland metropolitan area and across



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the state. “The Challenge supports BTA's goals to enhance biking safety and biking rates overall,” she said.

Halfway through the Challenge, more than 10,000 riders logged at least one trip, Noll revealed, adding that “people are still registering, so we’re hoping to beat last year’s total of 12,000 riders.”

According to Noll, increasing bike commuting requires “a special mixture of gentle peer pressure and strong peer support.” In addition, many workplaces succeed in signing up new riders just for the fun of the competition.

One of the competitive teams Noll highlighted was from Reed College, which competes in the “Businesses and Non-Profits, 500+ employees” category. Todd Hesse, whose commute spans 10 miles, remarked that the team he captains won its division two years in a row, with a commute rate of almost 11%, out of 519 employees (this year 117 employees signed up and 69 logged at least one trip by mid-September).

In addition to encouraging regular riders to sign up, Hesse’s secret is to “help people who don’t bike to remove mental barriers. For example, I offer to meet novice riders at their doorstep, and ride with them to work, to find the best route. It takes the intimidation factor out of the commute.”

Matthew Sancomb captains Arleta Elementary School’s team. Sancomb bikes four miles from Sellwood, and aimed for a 100% commute rate for September. He highlighted the Challenge’s community element, saying, “I pass the other four colleagues on the team in the hallway, and we connect over the fact we bike to work. We’re sharing what’s important to us.”

Some companies offer incentives to their employees for participating in the Challenge. Ardenwald resident, and New Seasons Market’s Sellwood Team Co-Captain, Gordon Latta said his company offers gift cards to employees who sign up (26 registered, and 14 had logged a trip by mid-September). Latta told us that he sold his car in April! “My teammates feel biking is good exercise and it helps protect the environment. People want to participate in something good.”

Elsewhere, the Challenge helps companies serve their customers better. Kaia McLaren, Captain of the Bike Gallery’s Woodstock team, which competes in the Bike Store category, told THE BEE that all store employees bike to work regularly “and, for many of them, the bicycle is the only form of



by: PETER KORCHNAK - Sellwood New Seasons Market Team Co-Captain Gordon Latta. 'People want to participate in something good.'



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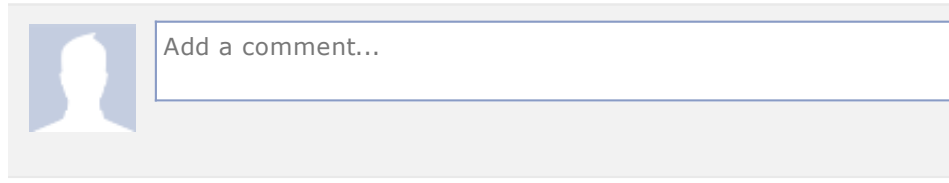


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transportation they use. McLaren said that, as a result, “the Challenge is less about changing our behavior, and more about helping our customers to commute.” For future reference, riders sign up for the event at: [HYPERLINK "http://www.BikeCommuteChallenge.com"](http://www.BikeCommuteChallenge.com) and then log their miles. According to the website, “the workplaces with the highest percentage of commutes by bicycle win.”



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