



ABBY DREY adrey@centredaily.com

A cyclist rides down Allen Street in State College on Tuesday as an electronic sign reminds drivers that "it's the law" to give bicyclists 4 feet of space. County Board of Commissioners Vice Chairman Mark Higgins declared the month of May as National Bike Month in Centre County.

BY JEREMY HARTLEY
jhartley@centredaily.com

BELLEFONTE

As the coming summer months compel more county residents to get outdoors and into the fresh air, residents have also begun to dust off their bicycles and hit the roads.

Cycling is the second most popular outdoor activity, behind walking and hiking, county Board of Commissioners Vice Chairman Mark Higgins said Tuesday. Given Higgins' own passion for cycling, it was only appropriate that he be the one to declare the month of May as National Bike Month in Centre County.

"The Centre County government urges all who support cycling to participate in all events planned for this month," Higgins read, "and all users to share the road safely with cyclists."

CENTRE COUNTY

Commissioners declare 'bike month'

May recognized as National Bike Month for more than 60 years

Nonprofit organization CentreBike highlights how cycling is growing in county

The bicycle is a viable and environmentally sound use of transportation, he said, as well as an excellent form of recreation. In 2013, the number of bike commuters in the U.S. grew more than 62 percent.

May has been declared National Bike Month for more than 60 years, he said.

CentreBike Executive Commit-

tee President Anna Nelson spoke before the board members, thanking them for recognizing bike month. Cycling has seen a lot of momentum in the county, she said, and several communities are actively improving their cycling options.

CentreBike is a nonprofit organization that encourages cycling and works to make cycling

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Anna Nelson, CentreBike executive committee president

more visible in the county, she said.

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the number of cyclists,” she said. “More people are riding not only for recreation and to increase their health, but also as a means of transportation.”

Nelson echoed Higgins’ comment that being close to a bike path does increase home value, saying that people are starting to pay attention to those amenities. Many local businesses near bikeable areas also see an increase in business, as it’s easier for a cyclist pedaling through a commercial area to stop at a store, where someone driving a car may not have the incentive to stop.

The Central Pennsylvania Convention and Visitors Bureau has also met with CentreBike to discuss increasing tourism to the area through its cycling options, she said.

Nelson reminded commissioners that the League of American Bicyclists named the State College region as a bronze-level bicycling area. The Centre Region Council of Governments recently completed a comprehensive bike plan detailing how the region can become more connected in terms of bike paths and lanes.

State College was also ranked No. 9 in the nation as one of the most bikeable cities and communities of 2015.

Higgins also reminded the county that Friday is National Bike to Work Day, asking the riders of the county to get out with their bikes for their morning and evening commute.

Several bike-related events have been planned in State College during the month of May. A forum, titled “Building a Bike-Friendly Community” is planned for 5:30 p.m. May 17 at the State College Municipal Building, borough communications Coordinator Courtney Hayden said.

People from all over the Centre Region will gather at the forum to discuss how



ABBY DREY adrey@centredaily.com

A cyclist rides down Atherton Street in State College on Tuesday. The Centre County Board of Commissioners has declared the month of May “bike month.”

the regional bike plan will be implemented, she said, and where the region goes from here in terms of bikeability. State College will also be resubmitting its plan to the League of American Bicyclists in an attempt to achieve silver-level status.

The annual Family Fun Ride is also scheduled for May 21, according to the CentreBike website, inviting all cyclists for a leisurely ride around State College.

Jeremy Hartley:
814-231-4616,
@JHartleyNews

Ensuring a safe summer

As cyclists gear up for a summer of riding, the American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division, reminds riders to focus on head protection during National Bike Month.

Nineteen bicyclists were reported killed in Pennsylvania in 2014, according to a society news release, and an additional 1,298 were injured in crashes. To help prevent injuries, one of the most important pieces of safety equipment a cyclist can wear is a helmet.

“Bike helmets are a vital piece of safety equipment that everyone, regardless of age, should wear whenever riding a bike,” ATSPA CEO Judy May-Bennett said.

The ATSPA recommends that riders always wear a properly fitted helmet, inspect their bike before going on a ride, always ride in the same direction as vehicle traffic, obey all traffic signals, wear brightly colored clothing and never use a cell phone or ride while impaired by drugs or alcohol.

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