



CDT photo/Abby Drey

A biker rides down Pollock Road on the Penn State campus on Thursday. Penn State is surveying students about a bike-share program.

PEDALING the future

*Plans examined
to improve
region's bike
friendliness*

By Jeremy Hartley
jhartley@centredaily.com

As spring slowly creeps into the state, cyclists of all types will be taking to the roads and paths of the region.

While these two-wheeled travelers are welcome to ride, they are also encouraged to help shape the Centre Region Bicycle Plan which frames the paths and connections throughout the community.

The plan will examine the existing and proposed facilities throughout the region such as paths and lanes, Centre Region Planning Agency senior transportation planner Trish Meek said, as well as improving non-infrastructure elements like education and enforcement.

In 2012, the League of American Bicyclists named the State College Region as a bronze level bicycling area, she said. As part of the award, the league provided feedback to the region recommending the development of comprehensive regional bike program.

"By moving forward with the plan," she said, "the region is looking to move up as being more bike-friendly."

Working through the plan would create a more-connected region, she said, and do more to create a

bike-friendly environment.

"There's more of a desire for bicycle and pedestrian facilities," she said.

Meek said she's meeting with the planning commissions of the different municipalities to identify and inventory all the current facilities each offers — shared-use paths, bike lanes and bike paths.

By identifying all these routes, she said, critical links can be identified, creating a blueprint that will help the municipalities move forward. The municipalities can then fund the building of these paths within their own boundaries.

Cyclists can help by participating in an information-gathering effort by the Council of Governments to gauge input on bicycling in the region, she said. Through May 29, cyclists are invited to fill out an informal survey asking for information such as how often the person bikes, how far and preferences on cycling facilities.

Residents are also invited to a public meeting April 15 at the COG building to help put together the first draft plan, she said.

While Centre Region residents are invited to give input into cycling in their community, Penn State is also seeking information from its students regarding a potential bike

share program.

Over the past few years, the Office of Transportation has been hearing from faculty, staff and students if a bike-sharing program could be implemented, transportation services special projects coordinator Jason Thomas said. Students often come from larger areas where these types of programs have become popular.

"As they're coming from places where they've had it or seen it, there's more and more interest in it," he said.

The survey presents different models of service as well as the places on campus where share services would be most useful, he said.

A bike-sharing program would be a big component in sustainability around the campus, he said. The challenge in the core of campus is to alleviate traffic, making it safer for cyclists and pedestrians. The hope is if a share program were started, it would encourage employees and students not to drive their vehicles from building to building.

There are about 4,600 bicycles registered on campus, he said.

Jeremy Hartley can be reached at 231-4616. Follow him on Twitter @JHartleyNews.