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Melanie Rosenberger hands Chip Mefford a bag of food to be delivered by bicycle. The Friends and Farmers Cooperative Online Market hosted a Bike Delivery Day on Tuesday. The cyclists made deliveries of locally grown food to customers who specified “deliver by bike.”

FRIENDS AND FARMERS COOPERATIVE

Local co-op gets a little **GREENER**

Friends and Farmers Cooperative launched its inaugural Bike Delivery Day on Tuesday

Co-op plans to continue delivery of locally grown and raised food via bicycle throughout the summer

Idea gained momentum in conjunction with National Bike Month

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STATE COLLEGE

Melanie Rosenberger tucked the bok choy and lettuce gently in the bag, getting the produce ready for its final trip to the table. She took extra care while packing the eggs.

The food, all locally grown or raised, was

destined for the kitchen of State College Mayor Elizabeth Goreham, who selected a different delivery option over the weekend from the Friends and Farmers Cooperative Online Market. Instead of getting her order delivered by van as usual, she chose a newer, greener route.

“She does a lot for us, so it’s nice for us to have her as a member,” Rosenberger said. “I’ve seen her on her bike a lot, too.”

Rosenberger, the market manager at the co-op, watched as Chip Mefford rolled away on his cargo bike with the food in tow. Mefford, along with two others, delivered the first orders via bicycle for the organization, which helps make local food more accessible in Centre County. The online market features 35 vendors, Rosenberger said, with designs on 40 to 45 by the end of summer.

Goreham’s bok choy, for instance, came from Jade Family Farm in Port Royal. On

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Melanie Rosenberger and Chip Mefford review an order to be delivered by bicycle. The Friends and Farmers Cooperative Online Market hosted a Bike Delivery Day on Tuesday. The cyclists made deliveries of locally grown food to customers who specified "deliver by bike." Below: Todd Miner loads food onto his bicycle for delivery.

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BICYCLE

Tuesday, it got an extra dash of sunlight on Mefford's ride downtown.

"If we can provide some greener alternatives to delivery, then that's a good step for our community," Rosenberger said.

After Mefford departed, Todd Miner, the owner of Vamos! Lion Chariot, headed toward Easterly Parkway with his delivery, produce instead of passengers nestled in the back of his pedicab.

Grace Emmerling, the vice president of the Friends and Farmers board of directors, came to the co-op in October and has seen the organization grow steadily during her tenure. Over the past eight months, Friends and Farmers has added more than 70 members and is close to its May goal of 450. The co-op is targeting 800 members to start looking at brick-and-mortar store possibilities, Emmerling said, and hopes that ideas such as the bike delivery day catch on.

"One of the major things that attracts me to the cooperative is that our food system can serve as a core for our entire community, that all of these talents, skills and abilities can come together around



food," Emmerling said. "This is just one example of that."

The idea blossomed near the end of April when Anna Nelson, the president of CentreBike, sent a Facebook message to the co-op suggesting that some orders could be delivered by bicycle. "Immediately," Emmerling said, the wheels started turning. Emmerling contacted Mefford, who then got Miner involved. With May being National Bike Month, the confluence of factors made organizing the delivery day an easy decision for the group. In two weeks time, a fleet of cyclists had been assembled and, as usual,

the produce was at the ready.

"Enthusiasm ensued," Emmerling said.

According to Emmerling, the co-op averages 70 orders a week, while the online market, which launched in December 2014, gets around 25 orders in the same time frame. The co-op is planning to continue the bike-delivery option for the rest of the summer. When placing orders online, members can mark their delivery choice in the comments section. Rosenberger said gaining traction with deliveries downtown and on Penn State's campus is one of the organization's next

goals.

For Mefford, who has been living car-free for three years, the trip was a relatively easy one. His bike, however, carried a little more weight than usual — whether from the food or the expectations of delivering the mayor's order.

"We'll see how it goes," he said, laughing. "I'm hoping it will all be downhill."

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