

Bike trail plans reviewed

BY SARAH VASILE
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Biking is already a popular mode of transportation among Penn State students and State College residents, and during a recent meeting, the borough's Planning Commission reviewed a plan that would make State College — and other Centre region municipalities — even more bike friendly.

The Centre region already boasts a rating as a “Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Community,” granted by the League of American Bicyclists in May 2012.

During the meeting, Trish Meek, senior transportation planner at the Centre Regional Planning Agency, presented a comprehensive bike plan that aimed to improve biking conditions throughout the Centre region.

Meek said improving the biking framework is important because the Centre region has a higher percentage of bicycle commuters than most areas.

“Many people think of bikes as a recreation source, but in our community it's important to recognize they're being used as a means of transportation,” Meek said.

As a whole, the Centre region scored lowest on the “infrastruc-

Biking in State College

There's currently more than 12 miles worth of bike trails in State College, which will be expanded in the future.

3.11 miles
of shared
use paths

4.0 miles
of bike
lanes

5.14 miles
of bike
routes



Source: Trish Meek, with the Centre Region Council of Governments

Paige Kozeniewski/Collegian

ture techniques” portion of the League of American Bicyclists’ evaluation. To remedy this, Meek said municipalities such as State College would have to work to inform citizens about biking rules and encourage biking as a transportation method.

She cited a study from People for Bikes, which found that 60 percent of bicyclists were “inter-

ested but concerned” about using biking as their primary mode of transportation.

“If we want people to move to bikes as a viable form of transportation, we need to capture that 60 percent,” Meek said.

Meek made it clear that the best way to encourage biking in State College is to heighten

See **BIKES**, Page 2.

Bikes

FROM Page 1.

individual awareness regarding use of shared-use paths, as well as informing road bicyclists about the “4-foot pass law” in Pennsylvania. That law states that there has to be a minimum of 4 feet between cars and bikes sharing a roadway.

Planning Commission member Richard Kalin said he was “in that 60 percent” of cautious bikers, and suggested shared bike lanes be connected to Penn State, a common destination for a number of bicyclists.

The Centre Region Council of Governments plans to host a meeting regarding the bike plan on April 15, and Meek said

they also put together an informal online survey to “gauge interest in bicycling in the region.”

While members of the commission seemed to have a positive reception to the plan, members of the community were more critical.

John Simbeck, owner of 601 Enterprises, 601 W. College Ave., said he was “dismayed and frustrated” with the way projects were being handled in the borough, and asserted that using Gill Street land for bike paths would “ruin [his] business.”

Simbeck continued to say the West End of State College is rarely improved by Planning Commission projects.

“I feel my concerns have fallen on deaf ears,” Simbeck said.

Planning Commission chairman Michael Roeckel said if citizens on Gill Street are adamantly

against the paths the commission would listen and keep their concerns in mind.

The sale of the Verizon Building, which is being sought after by four separate parties, was also briefly discussed at the meeting, although planner Meagan Tuttle said she and others involved in the commission were unsure what the borough council’s final decision was going to be.

“I’m going to be an optimist and say whatever ends up happening with the Verizon Building ends up being a winner for the borough,” Kalin said.

The Verizon Building project will be discussed further during the borough council’s meeting and work session on April 13.

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