



The Web Site of The Sacramento Bee

June 4, 2008

## Bicycling in region rolls up big gains

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For years, cycling advocates have been trying with limited success to spread the word that the bicycle was one answer to many of our commuting headaches. People caught on, but no one was suggesting that old-fashioned pedal power had transformed the landscape.

This year, it's different. Unprecedented gas prices and a host of other variables, including the temporary closure of Interstate 5, mainstream awareness of our carbon footprint, ever-increasing emphasis on fitness and newfound support from employers, have created a groundswell of bicycle commuting in the Sacramento area. What might come of it remains to be seen. Tuesday, the second full commuting day of the I-5 closure, found cyclists of all kinds going to and from work. It seemed practically European out there.

One of those cyclists was Robert Brosemer, an AT&T engineer. It was his first attempt at riding from his West Sacramento home to his office near the intersection of Watt and El Camino avenues.

"It's something I've been thinking about doing for a long time," he said. "It was 18 miles, but it was not as bad as I thought it would be. The bike trail was surprisingly full." Brosemer plans to roll out the bike once a week and see how it fits into his commuting plans. Apparently, there are a lot of folks doing the same thing.

In its fourth year of trying, the Million Miles in May campaign actually topped 1 million miles of commuting and recreational miles logged in the region by about 6,500 participants on [www.MayIsBikeMonth.com](http://www.MayIsBikeMonth.com).

"We spent a month bringing visibility to biking. There was a lot of encouragement and camaraderie to get people to give cycling a try," said Marilyn Bryant, executive director of the nonprofit Sacramento Management Transportation Association.

"I'm seeing lots more people out on bikes, that's for sure," said Ed Cox, the city's bike and pedestrian coordinator. "Primarily, it has to do with the higher price of gasoline. Fixing I-5 probably has something to do with it as well, but that is only temporary."

With tight budgets, cycling-related projects may get a closer funding look. At least that's what Cox is banking on.

"I've got lots of trails that are on our books as plans but we just don't have any funding for," he said. "I hate to say this, but long after the last drop of gas is burned, there will still be bikes."

Steve Miklas, the vice mayor in bike-friendly Folsom, said, "The least expensive way with the most benefit is signage – put out signs that say 'share the road.' The second-least expensive thing is to paint some striping in the street. When you perceptually shrink the roadway, the traffic slows down."

The cycling groundswell this spring also resulted from new attitudes of numerous employers throughout the region. At Williams + Paddon Architects in Roseville, 45 of 50 employees rode their bikes at least once in May and combined to rack up 9,240 miles.

The company played a role in drumming up enthusiasm, including making a three-minute video, "Blazing Saddles" (available at YouTube) and offering incentives from T-shirts to custom cycling jerseys for those who rode.

Tye Brown, a graphic designer at the firm, said the experience has lifted the mood around the office.

"It takes you back to your childhood," he said, noting that three of the six partners have purchased bikes in the past year.

"It has been a great thing for us and it has really become part of the culture of who we are."

The firm provided space for employees to keep clothes, arranged companywide bike outings and created a car-sharing program for those who had to attend meetings away from the building.

The major emphasis was on well-being, not politics.

"We're not trying to solve the world's problems by riding a bike," Brown said.