

A Month for Bicycle Advocacy

Mark Dieterich, Providence Bicycle Coalition

Every year, the League of American Bicyclists (www.bikeleague.org) denotes the month of May as Bike Month. If you aren't already involved with bicycle advocacy, this is the perfect time to start! You might be asking yourself how?

For starters, make sure you participate in **Bike-to-Work Day on May 16th** and do your best to help promote the event; tell co-workers, friends, and neighbors.

This year, The Providence Bicycle Coalition (PBC), The Providence Foundation, and The US Open Cycling Foundation (www.usopencycling.com) are teaming up to organize the Providence Bike-to-Work event. If you live in or commute to Providence, please be sure to join us for the festivities. Keep an eye on the PBC website (bikeprovidence.org) for announcements about Providence Bike Month activities.

Bike Month is also an excellent time to review your cycling activities. If you are an active recreational cyclist, the PBC would like to encourage you to take the next step and consider becoming a transportation cyclist. Do you need to drive your car on those errands or could you ride your bike? Have you considered commuting to work on your bike? If your commute is too long to complete by bike, have you considered taking a multimodal (train/bus/bike/walk) approach? Even commuting a few times a week, or just running errands around your house, can make a positive impact on your health, help the environment, and spread the word that bicycles deserve a share of the road. The PBC will continue to advocate for a safer and more functional bicycle presence in Providence, but we need all cyclists to do their part; ride frequently, and responsibly.

This brings me to my next point, who or what is Providence Bicycle Coalition?

During the Fall of 2007, a number of likeminded cyclists met over dinner to discuss the lack of organized cycling advocacy in Providence. While there are many great groups interested in cycling in and around Providence, it became clear that these groups were not effectively communicating with each other.

The PBC was born to fill this gap and now includes representatives from Bike-To-Brown, Brown Cycling, Greenways Alliance of RI, East Coast Greenways Alliance, Narragansett Bay Wheelmen, Providence Bicycle, RI Environmental Network, RIDOT, Sierra Club, The Hub, and USEPA. We have monthly advocacy meetings to discuss any ongoing advocacy efforts of the various groups and brainstorm about new advocacy efforts that should be considered.

Some of the efforts currently underway include: Providence Bike-to-Work Day, a survey to help determine what we can do to encourage more cyclists to commute by bicycle, rallying local cyclists to support the US Open Cycling Race, bicycle safety classes, and commuter cycling classes. In addition, we do our best to represent cycling interests by sending representatives to city and state meetings of importance, such as State Traffic Commission and Transportation Advisory Committee meetings. If you are looking to become more involved with ongoing cycling advocacy, the PBC would welcome more people at our monthly advocacy meetings.

Until next time, keep the rubber side down, follow the rules of the road, and do your best to be an ambassador for cycling.



Bike-to-Work Day, 2007, was a rainy day in Providence. However, riders kept stopping by in Kennedy Plaza for coffee, pastries and a chat. Photo: Heidi Cote

