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Madison Bikes launches: Focus on improving bicycling for all

MADISON- Madison is a “Platinum Bicycle Friendly Community,” according to the League of American Bicyclists. But Madison Bikes—a new group that “envisions a city where everyone can bicycle conveniently and comfortably to any place in the city and neighboring communities year round”—thinks there is still a lot of work to do.

“Madison is a great city for getting around by bike. It’s great for confident riders in particular, but many people who are interested in riding their bikes don’t feel comfortable on busy streets with nothing separating themselves from fast-moving cars except a stripe of paint. We can double the number of people who ride their bikes for transportation just by closing some key gaps in our bike network,” said one of the founders, Grant Foster.

“Madison has done a great job over the last several decades in building out an extensive network of paths and in installing some innovative bike treatments” said Foster. “But most people can’t get from where they are to where they want to go only on paths. We have to make our streets feel as comfortable as those off-street paths to people on bikes. The measure for all new and rebuilt streets should be, ‘Would you let your child ride on that street?’”

Madison Bikes says that a major focus will be on working to close the gaps in Madison’s existing bicycle network, ensuring equitable access to high-quality bike infrastructure in all parts of the city. Intersections and busy roads that leave people on bikes feeling exposed can make trips to work, shopping, school, or social events difficult or intimidating for many people who would like to have an alternative to driving.

Madison Bikes Steering Committee members also pointed out that improved bicycling options benefit everyone, even those who don’t bike.

Former Alder Robbie Webber, who now works with a number of states on transportation sustainability issues, explained: “Every person who bikes is one less person vying for a parking spot. And we can’t build our way out of congestion. Bicycling also supports transit use because it gives people options for the ‘last mile’—the gap between bus stops and their home, job, or other destination. With BCycle downtown and racks to carry bikes on the bus, better bicycling options make using the bus easier. If we can get more people using bikes, transit, or walking, our roads will last longer. That’s good for everyone paying taxes.”

Harald Kliems, a researcher in pediatrics at the UW, pointed out another benefit of active transportation: “It is now widely accepted that high rates of active transportation are related to improved health, both for individuals and for the population as a whole. And to enable people to use active transportation, you need good infrastructure and an empowered community.”

“The Bike Fed believes that the best progress can be made at the local level,” said Wisconsin Bicycle Federation Executive Director and former Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz. “As a statewide organization we can’t be at every meeting or know every player in each community. So these kinds of local advocacy organizations are really important. We want to help Madison Bikes grow and be successful in any way we can.”

More information about Madison Bikes can be found on their website, madisonbikes.org, on [Facebook](#), or [Twitter](#).