

Marin Community Partners

Breaking away from a bad commute

Nonmotorized transportation pedals forward in Marin

The traffic down Sir Francis Drake in the morning must be the worst in all of Marin County. Or maybe Southbound Highway 101 is worse. Or maybe it's one of the many other bottlenecks driving commuters mad. But getting to work is a breeze for Jeff Allen of Minto and Wilkie Associates, a busy insurance agency in San Rafael. Allen, who lives in Tiburon, rides a bike all the way to work every day, rain or shine, for fun and exercise. Beating a horrible commute is just a bonus.

"I'm the quintessential utilitarian cyclist," says Allen, 55, president of the company and employer of 15 agents. "I'm no racer or weekend warrior. I ride my bike everywhere I can."

When he gets to work in the morning, following bike paths all the way, Allen jumps into the shower and is ready for a busy day. Bike paths, bike racks, showers and improved signage are all essential components of the kind of "nonmotorized transportation infrastructure" that Allen supports. It's all part of a growing movement across America to get people out of their cars and create alternative ways to get to work, school or play. It's a growing movement that got its humble start right here in Marin County; now communities all across the country are watching attentively and following Marin's direction.

"I think a lot of companies in Marin are interested in doing whatever they can to get people out of their cars," says Allen, "so they don't lose their employees. If a company doesn't want to build a shower, they could offer a membership to the local gym, or lobby for tax incentives that get bike paths built, or partner with nonprofit agencies that are building the infrastructure for nonmotorized transportation. I have noticed a huge growth in the number of cyclists here in Marin."

Creating informal partnerships between nonprofit agencies, socially responsible businesses, government officials and departments, local citizens and concerned community groups is a technique that has been used to great success by local bicycle activists. The practice of "piggybacking" on other transportation projects has also pumped approximately \$65 million into nonmotorized projects such as the "multi-modal pathways" found

in Tiburon, Mill Valley, Larkspur and Corte Madera—where cyclists, joggers, children going to school, dog walkers and wheelchair riders all share the same space.

Wilderness Trail Bikes in Mill Valley is another socially responsible business working hard to promote alternatives to the automobile. WTB got its start back in the days when mountain biking was born on the slopes of Mt. Tam. It has grown into a highly successful supplier of bicycle components, and a sponsor of bike events and teams, but president Patrick Seidler sees a much bigger picture than just selling bicycle parts. As the founder of Transportation Alternatives in Marin (TAM), a public benefit company, he has a vision of promoting pedestrian and other nonmotorized transporta-

WHAT IS COMMUNITY JOURNALISM?

By Sam Chapman

Among the great things about Marin are the scores of non-profit organizations we have doing essential work to improve peoples' lives in every way imaginable. We are very fortunate to have the Marin Community Foundation, which marks its 20th year of existence this year, and says it made \$55,436,347 in grants and received \$25,708,012 in gifts in its 2005 fiscal year. Started with funds from the Buck trust, over 300 individuals, families, businesses, and community groups have since established funds at the foundation. But that is only part of the local story. MCF and local governments can't begin to fund all local needs and must cut back their funding depending on their own income, the economy and many other factors. Scores of businesses, community service groups and organizations in our community directly fund people and non-profits doing great things in Marin.

In our regular news pages we often focus on some of the good things that organizations are doing to connect people and build community in Marin. We love to tell positive stories. However, with limited space and the many other features we provide to our readers, we are only able to skim the surface of the hundreds of stories about the good works that are such a vital part of our community. In looking for a way to

tell more of these great stories and build further support for worthwhile organizations, we are launching a new feature in the *Sun*. It's called "Marin Community Partners."

The *Sun* has always been devoted to a local, human-scale approach. Our content is overwhelmingly locally focused. We are about Marin, its people, issues and happenings. We see "Marin Community Partners" as another way to spread the good word about organizations and people who are changing lives and making things better for individuals, one by one, on a very human scale. What we hope to achieve includes:

- Increased coverage of good things happening in our community
- Increased recognition of worthy people and projects
- Greater appreciation by local folks of the good works going on around them
- Enhanced dialogue and, where appropriate, debate about resolution of problems
- Greater support for particularly worthy projects

We will be looking for business partners in our community to help tell these worthy stories and hope to publish more of them on a regular basis. ■



Nonmotorized transportation advocates (left to right) Susie Weaver and Marcus Vinyan of Wilderness Trail Bikes, County Supervisor Charles McGlashan, Herb Meyer of In Home Services (in wheelchair), Jeff Allen of Minto and Wilkie Associates, Kim Baenisch of the Marin County Bicycle Coalition, and Aviva Joseph of Safe Routes to School.

In this issue we are pleased to highlight the work of

**TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES FOR MARIN
& THEIR COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Marin Community Partners

tion all across the country as an alternative to the automobile, and has traveled the world to study how other countries do it.

"TAM is a consensus-building organization that studies international best practices and educates decision-making groups about pedestrians and bicycles as the optimal transportation solution," says Seidler via phone from China, where he is meeting with customers and vendors and studying local transportation alternatives. "China has some incredible bicycle infrastructure. It would be nice to see more of it in Marin."

Seidler's current passion is creating the "North/South Greenway," a multi-modal pathway that will run alongside the revived SMART Rail tracks, if and when that route is re-opened. Essentially, Seidler envisions the Greenway as a 91-mile linear park running from Sausalito to Cloverdale, through tunnels and across bridges, connecting to schools, transit hubs and shopping districts. The linear park would also serve as a recreational outlet no different than a playground.

"That pathway will pass by 51 schools, seven park-and-ride lots, two ferry terminals and hundreds of businesses," says Seidler. "It would have a huge impact on traffic in Marin."

Herb Meyer is chair of the board of In Home Services of the County of Marin, whose 1,300 members might be housebound if not for multi-modal pathways. He describes the broad, paved pathways as a "vital link" for those in wheelchairs to get to buses and shopping.

"These paths are a safe and convenient way to travel around," says Meyer. "They're peaceful, there's no traffic or noise, and they allow me to meet and chat with people. I can get up to 10 miles on a single charge in my chair. I hope they build that North-South greenway along the old railway tracks. That will really help."

"Its important to note that these new multi-modal pathways are for everybody, and not just cyclists," says County Supervisor Charles McGlashan, who is on record as a strong environmentalist and a supporter of alternative sources of transportation. "We have to look at all ways of getting people from point A to point B within the county, which is where the majority of commutes are now located. In the future, with climate change occurring rapidly, people simply cannot use their cars for everything. I think Marin is building a model for nonmotorized transportation the whole nation can follow." For more information log on to www.wtb.com and www.tam.com.

Public workshops planned for nonmotorized transportation

On August 3, 2005, the local biking community woke up to discover it had won the lottery. Marin County had become the lucky recipient of \$25 million in federal funding to plan and build what was termed a Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program (NTPP), part of a gigantic \$286.5 billion omnibus transportation and highways bill finally passed by Congress after years of debate. Marin, along with three other communities across the country, was being asked to create a blueprint for the nation to get people out of their cars, start them walking and biking, and increase the nation's fitness while reducing reliance on foreign oil.

A plan paving the way for a \$25 million bicycle and pedestrian trail network was launched on March 22, 2006, when the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved Marin's pilot program. County public works direc-



Famed bike designer Joe Breeze models a Breezer "commuter bike" complete with carry bags, bell, light, kickstand and all the basics needed for short commutes to work or school.

tor Farhad Mansourian heads the project along with Craig Tackabery, assistant county public works director. Tackabery said the county will select projects out of 12 bicycle and pedestrian plans already adopted by various towns and cities in Marin.

The Transportation Authority of Marin has initiated a process to update the County of Marin and all cities' and towns' bicycle and pedestrian master plans, and to incorporate new improvements. A series of four public workshops will be held during November to get input on countywide issues, such as an inventory of existing and proposed bikeways as well as potential improvements.

The workshops are specifically targeted at updating each community's bicycle and pedestrian plan that serves as the framework for the construction of its bicycle and pedestrian network. While many projects envisioned by the respective bike/ped plans would be eligible for NTPP funding, allocation of these funds is through a separate process. A separate NTPP workshop is planned for the end of November to help identify candidate projects for NTPP funding.

Funding of \$450,000 from CalTrans for phases one and two has allowed NTPP planning to begin. Alta Planning and Design received \$234,000 for planning, community outreach, project and program identification and selection. A 19-member advisory committee, led by the Marin Department of Public Works, has been organized to work with Alta staff.

The next six months will focus on brainstorming, feasibility analysis, prioritization and cost estimation. Appropriate projects will be identified by March 2007 when environmental reviews, design and construction will commence. All construction projects will be completed by fall of 2009. Cost estimates for the highest-ranking projects will be made available by January 2007. Some simpler projects, such as street striping (of bike lanes) may commence immediately.

An initial survey of 6,000 postcards was mailed in *(continued on page 40)*

"Most short commutes in America can easily be done on a bike." – Joe Breeze

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Public workshops

(continued from page 39)

September to Marin households, and 400 were selected for extensive telephone interviews. A second survey will be undertaken in 2010, after construction projects have been completed, to ascertain whether "the desired transportation mode shift" has actually occurred. The Rails to Trails Conservancy has been awarded a contract to create a national communications program, to bring together all the communities working on nonmotorized transportation.

Other communities working on nonmotorized projects include Columbia, Missouri; Minneapolis-St. Paul; and Sheboygan County, Wisconsin. They will confer on a bi-weekly basis to share ideas and compare approaches. The University of Michigan will analyze the survey data outcomes and report to Congress.

More info as well as electronic copies of the bicycle and pedestrian plans can be found at www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/pw/main/NTPP.cfm

Marin County Bicycle Coalition continues building partnerships

Kim Baenisch is the current executive director of the Marin County Bicycle Coalition (MCBC). Since its inception in 1998, MCBC has grown to 1,300 members with a \$575,000 annual budget. Over the last 18 months, Baenisch has expanded the Share the Road campaign, implemented new fundraising campaigns, and developed creative partnerships that have increased membership and community visibility.

Former executive director Deb Hubsmith has moved to a new role as advocacy director, where she manages infrastructure projects and public policy. Hubsmith was also appointed to MCBC's advisory board and is acting as national coordinator of the Safe Routes to School Partnership.

While MCBC continues to lobby for infrastructure projects, Baenisch has been busy building partnerships ranging from Marin General Hospital, where educational programs for cyclists have been held, to relationships with police forces as part of its Share the Road campaign. It's Baenisch's belief that as a lot more cyclists hit the road, they need to do so safely.

During July and August, the coalition reached approximately 800 motorists and 1,500 cyclists with Share the Road information. New were checkpoints on bike paths in Tiburon and Sausalito. Uniformed officers and MCBC volunteers handed out flyers containing California Vehicle Code information, codes of conduct for bicyclists and motorists to foster



(Clockwise from top left) Supervisor Charles McGlashan, MCBC Director Kim Baenisch and SRTS teen coordinator Ariva Joseph, Transportation Alternatives for Marin founder Patrick Seidler, and Safe Routes to School National Partnership's Deb Hubsmith.

respect for each other, plus safety and courtesy tips.

"Teaming with the local law enforcement agencies continues to be an effective way to provide safety information to motorists and cyclists," Baenisch noted, "Holding the checkpoints on the bike paths proved to be a great way to reach more cyclists and walkers, who are usually also drivers."

Next is the development of a map that shows the bike routes corresponding with bike route signage being installed by the county at key locations. These bike routes were numbered and designed by famed bike designer Joe Breeze several years ago, but installation by the county has been slow, according to Baenisch, due to the coordination needed with each local Department of Public Works.

MCBC has been receiving frequent requests, so Baenisch wants the production of a map prioritized by the county. To date, the map project has been pushed off until all signs are installed.

Other MCBC priorities included expanded bike-skill and safety workshops for all cycling levels; a new Bike to Work Day campaign reaching employers and individuals; more partnerships with the health community to increase physical activity as a daily lifestyle choice; and the launch of a Capital Improvement Project tracking system in our neighborhoods.

For more info on MCBC log on to www.marinbike.org.

Safe Routes to School forms new national partnership

The federal omnibus bill that provided \$286.5 billion for transportation in 2005 included a whopping \$612 million for a new national Safe Routes to School program that will provide benefits in all 50 states. Communities will use this funding to construct new bike lanes, pathways and sidewalks, as well as to launch Safe Routes education and promotion campaigns in elementary and middle schools. That's an incredible show of support for a small program that started right here in Marin County just a few short years ago.

The Marin SRTS program began in 2000 with nine schools using a \$50,000 grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration,

November - Public Workshops

All workshops will be from 7-8:30 in the evening.
The public is invited to find out about existing bikeways and help identify new paths.

West Marin - Wed. Nov. 1

Pt. Reyes Fire House, 4th and B St, Pt. Reyes

Southern Marin - Thurs. Nov. 2

Mill Valley Community Center, 180 Camino Alto

Northern Marin - Wed. Nov. 8

Margaret Todd Senior Center, 1560 Hill Road, Novato

Central Marin - Mon. Nov. 13

San Rafael Community Center, 618 B Street, San Rafael

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\$25,000 from the Marin Community Foundation and \$25,000 from the California Department of Health Services. In the current school year SRTS serves 43 schools, organizing over 18,000 students in Marin. The program is currently supervised by the Transportation Authority of Marin.

This fall, 54 new crossing guards hit the streets of Marin. The funding came from Measure A, the half-cent transportation sales tax approved by Marin's voters in November 2004, which allocated 11 percent of the funding (or \$36 million over 20 years) to Safe Routes to School. In some cases the guards are stationed at new locations, and in others they replaced those provided by the schools, freeing dollars up for other school needs.

The legislation that created SRTS stated that funding must be spent on infrastructure projects and non-infrastructure activities. Infrastructure projects include bike lanes, trails, sidewalks, traffic calming, safer street crossings, speed reduction programs, and bike racks around schools. Non-infrastructure activities include encouragement programs, public awareness campaigns, outreach to the press and community leaders, traffic education and enforcement, educational sessions on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health and the environment, and funding for trainings, volunteers, and managers of Safe Routes to School programs. Caltrans currently has a call for applications on its Web site and will be awarding \$45 million for Safe Routes to School activities.

Out of all this has emerged a new initiative called the Safe Routes

to School National Partnership, a collaboration of bicycling and walking groups, as well as health advocates, schools, government agencies, and businesses. Deb Hubsmith is the coordinator of the coalition with 225 organizations nationwide.

Funded initially by Bikes Belong, a national cycling advocacy group, the partnership is designed grow the SRTS national movement, and to ensure that money authorized by the new federal transportation bill is put to the best possible use.

"Each State Department of Transportation is now developing its own application guidelines and processes to distribute the funds to community projects," says Hubsmith. "The partnership is spreading the word about best practices and building our coalition to ensure that Safe Routes to School succeeds throughout the U.S., as it has in Marin. We're aiming to change the habits of an entire generation."

For more info log on to www.saferoutestoschools.org/resources.

—Michael McCarthy

This special community service brought to you by
Transportation Alternative of Marin

*in partnership with Wilderness Trail Bikes,
the Marin County Bicycle Coalition, the Safe Routes to School Initiative,
and the Richardson Bay Safe Neighborhood Association.*

OVERFLOW

March - Selection of projects and programs to be funded by Board of Supervisors.

April - Design and environmental review for selected capital projects begins; program development initiated.

Summer, 2007-Summer, 2008 - Selected programs initiated; design, environmental review, and regulatory permitting for selected capital projects.

Summer, 2008-Fall, 2009 - Construction of capital projects.

For more info log on to www.tam.ca.gov.

(Sidebar #2)

Stats on Bicycling

4 percent of vehicular trips in the United States are two miles or less in length. Twenty five percent of trips in the United States are one mile or less, but 7 percent of these trips are made by automobile. (2001 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey).

5 percent of work commute trips are five miles or less. (Bureau of Transportation Statistics)

Hourly bike traffic counts in Marin:

Mill Valley Bike Path: 144 bicyclists/hour on weekend: 44 bicyclists/hour on weekday

Golden Gate Bridge: 640 bicyclists/hour on weekend: 160 bicyclists/hour on weekday

(Marin County Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, 2001)

46% of Americans bicycle for pleasure. (Marin County Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan 2001)

Nearly three million adults - about one in 60 - already commute by bike. This number could rise to 35 million if more bicycle friendly transportation system existed. (April 1999 Lou Harris Poll)

Bicycling is the second most preferred form of transportation after the automobile, ahead of public transportation. 41.3 million Americans (20 percent) used a bicycle for transportation in the 30 days measured in the survey. (Bureau of Transportation Statistics October 2000)

Over 9.2 million (22. percent) of the 41.3 million people who bicycled did so more than ten of the 30 days. (League of American Bicyclists.)

64 percent of the American adult population is overweight or obese. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

A 130-pound cyclist can burn 402 calories while pedaling

(Sidebar #3)

Sample of Infrastructure Improvements for Walking and Bicycling in Marin County

Funded since the creation of MCBC in 1998

Last updated October 2006

Constructed Capital Improvement Projects

Project	City/ Jurisdiction	
Inkwells Bridge west of Lagunitas	County	
Bike Racks on Buses	GGBHTD	\$
Sandra Marker Trail (West of High Canal Bridge)	Larkspur	\$
Safe Routes path by Edna MaGuire	Mill Valley	\$
Safe Routes to Schools - Brookside Schools and San Domenico	San Anselmo	\$
Bridgeway bike lanes	Sausalito	
Improvements along HOV near Larkspur	TAM	\$

Upcoming Capital Improvement Projects

Project	City/ Jurisdiction	
Central Marin Ferry Connection Project (CMFCP)	TAM	
Cal Park Hill Tunnel (include sonly pathway elements)	County	
Lincoln Hill HOV Gap Closure Project	TAM	

Planning for Capital Improvements

Projects	City/ Jurisdiction	
Alto Tunnel Study (2001)	County	
Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2001)	County	\$
Central Marin Ferry Connection Project (CMFCP) Study	Larkspur	\$
SMART Rail with Trail (2003)	SMART	\$

NOTE: Does not include \$12M Measure A SRTS or \$25M Non-Motorized Pilot funding.