

The Chamber Connection: Bike Friendly means more than you know! It means Business! Big Business!

By T. Myers

During the past two years, Travel Oregon and Bicycle lovers across the state have been working together to develop a program that can be used anywhere a bike can travel to let the public and cyclists know that people who ride bikes are welcome! At first it seemed to be a resurgence of grassroots support for the two wheeled conveyances- one that fits the lower carbon footprint of energy conscious Americans and it also served as a statement against higher gas prices. Both arguments for the good of the people!

In La Pine we installed a workable bike lane that far surpasses those in the urban settings. (I have yet to see a second bike making its way through the bike lane of La Pine, but none the less, it is here). The bike lane was also designed to impede speeding traffic and slow it down as it moved south on HWY 97. Two purposes-crossing at the former widening of the roadway to reduce its use once again, removing turn lanes and the ability to pass a vehicle in the outside lane that is no longer. H-m-m-m!

So, Oregon has taken on the idea of creating bike tours on the ground in different parts of the state. Towns and villages that are located on these routes are reaping the benefits of having a bike friendly attitude and offering amenities to bicycling visitors that are in the form of information booths, bike racks for parking, hotels with bike access in closed garages to prevent theft of precious bikes. (Prevention of bike theft is crucial-Like my daughter who rode her bike to Bi Mart last week on Monday the 10th and locked it in front of the pharmacy to go inside for a few minutes. When she returned, her bike lock was cut and her very expensive bike was long gone!) So these hoteliers offer storage solutions for guests. Some even extend free bikes to visitors with maps of the area so they can go and explore on two wheels instead of four and if they drove a car to the accommodations, they now have a place where they can get exercise and enjoy a slower look at the town they are visiting!

In these bike friendly towns they are setting up repair stations and someone in town is available with parts if needed. We could do it in our local auto shops or tire centers.

Seem like a lot? Just wait! Cyclists spend an average of 20% more at the places they stay and restaurants where they eat a meal and enjoy the hospitality of the area. They get hungry and thirsty and tired when they ride bikes all day long and when they check in, a friendly welcome goes a long way in setting up the spending that will follow. The next time they return? Guess what? They bring friends!

As a City, we can get signage (Travel Oregon has signs for a song that are uniform and attractive) that says we are bike friendly to put on our local businesses. We can arrange to put up accessible and safe bike racks for very little money at all of the places that visitors like to stop. We can learn how to 'talk bike' to our visitors and if we do those few small things and perhaps set up a nice bike tour of the local area and hand the visitors a nice little map to get started, we can score big with potential visitors who want an active hands-on way to recreate and vacation!

Can La Pine fit the bill for being bike friendly? If Bikes mean Business the way Oregon has determined, La Pine is poised to reap the rewards of Oregon's Bike related Travel Industry. It

contributes \$400 million annually to Oregon's economy. Bikers also spend \$175 million for accommodations and food service, \$54 million on groceries, \$72 million for motor fuel, \$32 million for event fees, \$28 million on bike repairs, clothing and gear. Serious bike travelers are part of the reason that there are 4600 bike related jobs in Oregon, an average of \$18 million in room related taxes into the state coffers and let me remind you that each and every biker who is on a trip spends 20% more than the car traveler when they come to your area.

Talk to the Chamber about being bike friendly. Call 541-536-9771 to support the idea of being Bike Friendly La Pine!