



Bike Or Bust: Bike To Work Day Proves Successful

By Rachael DeWitt, Earthscope Reporter

(This article was published in the Marin Scope Community Newspaper of June 29 - July 5, 2004)

Every day in Marin, citizens face a harsh paradox. In one sweeping glance from their car, they can see mountains, forests, creeks, wetlands, deer, vultures, but also runners, hikers, bikers, rangers, roads, pedestrians, stop lights and miles and miles of traffic congestion. The juxtaposition of the tranquility of nature with the jarringly constant passing of human traffic is a harsh reality to face.

On Thursday, May 20, Marin County citizens stepped away from their cars and onto their bikes to reduce the amount of cars on the road. Bike to Work Day, a national day of awareness, is a time to help out the environment and the community. Commuters biked to work with the support of volunteers, who managed and organized the event.

For over 10 years, the month of May has been designated National Bike Month. This spurred the creation of Bike to Work Week and Bike to Work Day, which in Marin is coordinated by the Marin County Bicycle Coalition, located in Fairfax. Bike to Work Day has grown by 10 percent from last year, with 2,200 bikers participating this year in Marin County.

"Bike to Work Day is a chance to get people out of cars for at least one day a year," said Steve Hesson of the Marin County Bicycle Coalition and coordinator of this year's Bike to Work Day events.

On May 20, the Bike Coalition set up over 15 "energizer stations" from Novato to the Golden Gate Bridge. At each station beverages and food were dispensed, along with literature about biking and public transportation, and tote bags.

"We just want to remind people that there is an alternative to driving to work," said Hesson. "Most people in Marin live within five miles of their work, a reasonable distance even for novice riders."

Biking is the solution to America's mounting health and environmental problems. Forty percent of trips made by Americans are a distance less than two miles. The greatest amount of energy used by cars is during the first 10 minutes of driving. Bike-able distances by car are the most polluting and the easiest to avoid. If more Americans biked, according to bike transportation expert Michael Bluejay, life expectancy would increase, asthma and lung cancer would decrease, and the United States would no longer be as dependent on foreign oil. Events like Bike to Work Day and the efforts of organizations like the Marin County Bicycle Coalition bring us one giant step closer to the solution.

On this day of community and volunteer work, new and veteran riders ride together across the county. From home to work and back, Bike to Work day is a wonderful way to get us outside, our hearts pumping and our feet peddling.

RESOURCES:

Want to learn more about local biking through the Marin County Bicycle Coalition? Visit:
www.marinbike.org